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A DISSERTATION
ON
INFANT BAPTISM.

A
DISSERTATION
ON THE
SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY,
NATURE, AND USES,
OF
INFANT BAPTISM.

BY RALPH WARDLAW, D. D.

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PREFACE.

So long ago as the year 1807, I published "Three Lectures on Romans iv. 9—25. designed chiefly to illustrate the Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant, and its connection with Infant Baptism; with an Appendix, on the Mode of Baptism."—It was my first publication: and, after the lapse of seventeen years, I have seen very little reason to alter or to modify the general principles of that work.—A Review of it appeared, in the end of the same year, from the pen of the late Mr. Archibald Maclean of Edinburgh, a man held in just estimation, not by his own party only, but by all who knew him, for natural acuteness of intellect, close application to the study of the scriptures, and general consistency of character. I was satisfied that my main positions were unshaken by the objections and counter-reasonings of the reviewer; and the chief consideration that prevented me from then replying was, the time it would necessarily occupy, which, I thought, might, on the whole, be more profitably employed. I am not now sure, whether this was a correct judgment.

A desire has repeatedly been expressed to me for the republication of these lectures. I could not, however, think of publishing them again in the same form. The great business of an expositor, I am fully aware, ought to be, to give a clear view of the scope, or main design, of the writer whom he expounds, and to show how his reasonings establish, and his illustrations elucidate, the point of which he treats. All matter that is not immediately relevant for this end, ought to be either omitted entirely, or very sparingly introduced;—if touched, not dwelt upon. The reason why this principle was departed from in the lectures, was one which I then thought, and still think, sufficient to justify the deviation. It is obvious, that the same *principles*, which a writer lays down, as the foundation of the conclusions which it is his object to establish, may often, with equal fairness, be made the basis of other conclusions, besides those which are at the time in his view: and principles settled by Divine authority it is, on this account, as well as for the sake of the inferences actually deduced from them, of the highest consequence to ascertain. We have then at least determinate premises; and have only to show how they bear us out in our deductions. Now, it may happen, that, at the very time when a minister, in the regular course of exposition, arrives at a particular passage, the minds of fellow-christians, in his own religious connections, or more extensively, may be occupied and agitated by subjects which, though not immediately connected with the doctrine which it is the writer's direct object to establish, may yet have a very intimate connection with the facts and principles brought forward by him for its confirmation. In such circumstances, it is surely warrantable for him, whilst he shows how these principles bear upon the writer's immediate object, to lay hold of them for a separate purpose, and, even at some length, to dwell on the particular subject respecting which he feels it to be of consequence to settle

the minds of his hearers. The only proper question, in such a case, would be, whether the principles were fairly stated, and whether the conclusions from them were legitimately deduced.—Such was precisely the state of things, when the lectures in question were delivered. But I am sensible, that the same reason which justified the introduction, at the time, of discussions on the Abrahamic covenant and infant baptism, to a length so disproportionate in illustrating the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, would hardly justify the republication of the lectures at a distant period, when the principles can be taken by themselves, and the argument separated entirely from that of the Epistle.—I have been led to make these remarks by an observation of Mr. Maclean, in the introduction to his review, very much fitted to prejudice the mind of his reader,—namely, that “he finds my main design to be, to support infant baptism, and that from two chapters,” (Rom. iv. and Gal. “iii.) where it is never once mentioned, nor does it appear in “the least degree to have entered into the mind or view of “the sacred writer.”—But Mr. Maclean does not accuse me of overlooking the object of the apostle, or of failing to show how that object is made out from his premises:—and the sole question with him ought to have been, whether the same premises which authorized the one conclusion, were or were not legitimately applied to the establishment of the other.

The work which is now presented to the public may be considered as a substitute for that part of the former which immediately regarded the subject of the Abrahamic covenant and baptism. It is, however, in almost all respects, a new work. The discussions are cleared from all the foreign matter, with which they were unavoidably associated by the passages on which the lectures were founded. The reasonings are, by this means, rendered more distinct and consecutive. The subject is treated more at large, in all its parts,

and especially in some which before were hardly, if at all, touched upon. To the whole train of argument an arrangement has been given, such as, it is hoped, may render it plain and easily followed, and may serve to free the subject of it from some portion at least of the confusion and difficulty, in which, to not a few minds, it has always appeared to be involved. Some of the leading objections, moreover, have been met, and, to my own satisfaction at least, exposed;—and what is said, in the third section, of the *USES* of infant baptism, is wholly new.

It may be thought, that the necessity of publishing at all was superseded by the late able work of my esteemed friend and colleague, Mr. Ewing. The larger proportion of his *ESSAY*, however, as the circumstances which gave rise to it might have led us to anticipate, relates to the *MODE* of baptism; and, although this is treated with a measure of originality, and of classical and biblical learning, highly creditable to its author,—there still seemed to be room left for a fuller and more systematic discussion of the other great branch of the controversy,—the *SUBJECTS* of the ordinance,—which is touched in the *Essay* indeed, and touched with the same ability, but which it is not the professed object of the writer to treat extensively. This part of the field the circumstances I have before stated had long determined me to occupy anew, previously to the publication of Mr. Ewing's work; and my determination was quickened to action by the appearance of an antagonist to him, and to the late Dr. Dwight, and to myself. I refer to the work of the Rev. F. A. Cox, of Hackney, put forth with the ponderous and appalling title—"On Baptism: chiefly in Reply to the
" *Etymological Positions of the Rev. Greville Ewing, in his*
" *'Essay on Baptism: the Polemic Discussions of the Rev.*
" *Timothy Dwight, S. T. D., LL. D., in his Work, en-*
" *titled, 'Theology; and the Inferential Reasonings of the*
" *Rev. Ralph Wardlaw, D. D. in his Lectures on the Abra-*

“hamic Covenant.”—In some of the advertisements of this work, the first part of the title, I observe, has undergone an alteration; and, instead of the “etymological *positions*,” we have the “etymological *novelties*,” of Mr. Ewing: and it is surely, in the annals of controversy, a somewhat curious circumstance, that an opponent should formally announce, in his title-page, a reply to precisely that part of the work he sets himself to oppose, which its author had himself declared to be unconnected with the course and conclusiveness of his argument:—for thus Mr. Ewing had expressed himself:—“Such is my attempt to analyze βαπτω and its related words. If any shall reject it; (I dare say many will;) in that case, they will of course disallow my theory for illustrating the origin, and the connection of the various meanings of those words. But they will not be able, thereby, to set aside the meanings themselves. These must still be tried by the force of the examples which may be produced in support of each by itself. Although I shall, in what follows, refer to my theory of the derivation of the terms, for the sake of showing how well it tallies with the application of them in the examples in which they occur; *I shall, in no case, use an argument, in support of their meaning, which shall rest on that theory.*”—To announce a formal reply to what an author has thus previously intimated to be unessential to his argument, a speculation of which the entire omission leaves its force untouched;—to produce upon the reader’s mind, by the very phraseology of a title-page, the impression, that that is the pith and substance of a work, and what chiefly calls for notice and exposure, which the writer himself announces he will not make the basis of a single proof;—and then, to confirm this false impression and prejudice, by applying ridicule, as the test of truth, to what, even were it overturned, would not, by its removal, affect, in the slightest degree, a single conclusion;—may be a convenient *ruse de*

guerre,—but it is neither ingenuous nor manly. It is very easy, however; and that adds to the convenience.—Whatever diversity of opinion may subsist on some unessential points, Mr. Cox's assault has, in my judgment, left the main positions, on which Mr. Ewing's argument rests, in their full strength.

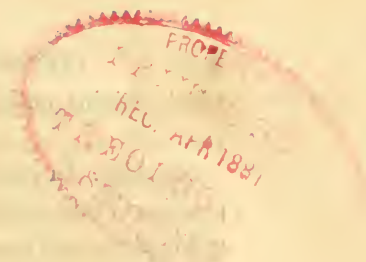
Although the appearance of Mr. Cox's strictures hastened the fulfilment of a previous intention, the following pages are not to be considered as a reply to his work. They are not a formal reply to any one. I follow the train of my own argument, and take notice of the objections of others, as they come in my way. And I trust it will be found, I have not shrunk from meeting my opponents (or rather, let me say, the opponents, the conscientious opponents, of the views I advocate)—fully and fairly, in the main points of their strength.—I have had occasion, once or twice, to allude to the strictures of the Rev. Mr. Birt, of Manchester, on a sermon by my excellent friend, the Rev. H. F. Burder, of Hackney, a neighbour and fellow-labourer of Mr. Cox;—and I gladly embrace the opportunity of saying, that, although there may be one or two minor statements in that sermon in which I might not thoroughly acquiesce, it appears to me to be distinguished by the clearness and cogency and comprehensive brevity of its reasonings, as well as by the piety and the christian meekness of its spirit; and to remain little if at all affected, in its great general principles, by the animadversions of his opponent.—I have now and then referred to, and quoted, other publications. But indeed these are now, on both sides, so numerous, that I have found it better not to cumber myself by looking into many, and so exposing myself to the temptation of introducing matter, either quite extraneous, or but remotely connected with my argument.

It has been my endeavour to adhere to the Latin maxim,

“*Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re,*” familiarly rendered in English, “Soft words, and hard arguments.” Whether I have succeeded or failed, the reader must judge. If occasionally I may have expressed myself (of which, however, I am not conscious) with unbecoming asperity, may I find forgiveness of Him who has said, “The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men.”—To his blessing I humbly commend this part of my labours, in the conviction,—a conviction that has gained strength by every new examination of the subject,—that the cause is his, and that its opponents, however plausible their scheme may be rendered, (and it is admitted, in some of its points, to be susceptible of *great* plausibility,) have not a foot-breadth of solid scriptural ground to stand upon.

R. W.

GLASGOW, }
13th January, 1825. }



INTRODUCTORY

OBSERVATIONS.

SOME are disposed to deprecate all such discussions as the one on which I am now entering, under the common designation of *unprofitable controversy*. That it is *controversy*, I admit;—that it is *unprofitable controversy*, I deny. If I thought it so, I trust I should have grace to abstain from it. But I think otherwise, for the following reasons:—

In the first place : As a pædobaptist, I am accustomed, along with my brethren of the same persuasion, to administer the ordinance of baptism, as occasions present themselves, both privately and publicly, to the infant children of believers; and we are countenanced in so doing by our churches and congregations. Now every thing that we do, as professed subjects of the Lord Jesus, ought to be done, not blindly, or in mere conformity to custom, but from a scriptural and enlightened conviction of duty. To call any institution an ordinance of God, and persist in adherence to it, without knowing either its import, or the reason of observing it, is unworthy a professor of that religion,

which enjoins nothing but what is "reasonable service."

Secondly : In consequence of the universality of the practice of infant baptism, and the consequent frequency of the abuse and prostitution of the ordinance, believers themselves are in no small danger of attending to it as a mere matter of course, without due consideration, either of the nature of the rite, the grounds on which the administration of it to their children rests, or the parental obligations, so deep and so solemn, that are inseparably connected with it.

Thirdly : I see no reason whatever, why pædobaptists should feel the slightest disposition to evade the question, or the most distant fear,—although on both sides there may be minute points of difficulty,—to meet it fully, fairly, and openly, in all its great general bearings.

Fourthly : There are too many, especially of the young, who, in the outset of their christian profession, have not their minds directed at all to the subject. It is an unexamined point. And these persons, when, in this state of want of knowledge and information, they happen to fall in with a baptist friend, a baptist book, or a baptist argument, feel themselves unprepared to meet what is new and startling; their minds are in danger of being immediately unsettled, and of hastily adopting what is presented to them with no little plausibility, and possibly too with much imposing confidence.—I invite the attention of my young christian readers,—not fearing, that if we are only enabled to come to the subject without the heat of party opinionativeness, in a cool, composed, and reasonable frame of spirit, and especially in humble dependence on Divine

teaching, we shall be led into all truth, and established in the due observance of every scriptural institution.

Fifthly: The discussion does not exclusively regard a particular instituted observance; it involves principles and topics, such as are very closely connected with the right understanding of a large proportion of the Old Testament scriptures, and with just views of the Divine procedure towards his church from the beginning to the end of its history.

Lastly: I am satisfied, that the argument respecting the validity of infant baptism is far from being so difficult and formidable, as, from the numberless pamphlets and volumes that have been written upon either side of the question, many are ready, without further inquiry, to suppose. They shrink from approaching the subject, under the apprehension, (not altogether unnatural,) that if such a mass of controversy must be gone through in order to bring their minds to a settlement, it is a hopeless case. They will not venture into the flood;—it is frothy and turbulent, and troublesome to pass, and they have little certainty of finding solid footing beyond it. They heave a desponding sigh; and, as the easiest at least, if not the best and safest way to dispose of the subject, they dismiss it with the trite and indolent remark, that “much, it seems, may be said on both sides.”—And it is true, that a vast deal *has been* said on both sides; much more, in my apprehension, than enough; much that is needlessly abstruse,—much that is very irrelevant,—much that has only involved the combatants in clouds of “learned dust,” which has served to blind the eyes of common and unlettered men, and almost at times, I fear, to blind their own.

Nothing can be easier, on such a subject, especially

now, when we have so much criticism about it made up by others and ready to our hand, than even for the veriest sciolist to make a mighty parade of learning:—nothing, I say, can be easier,—unless indeed it be, speaking with great positiveness and dogmatism—a figure of speech, which, on all subjects, has been too much resorted to, as a substitute for the lack of argument.—On no subject, it is granted,—and especially, on no subject that involves the obligations of conscience towards God, are we to allow ourselves to be determined by the weight of names and of human authority. “He that judgeth us is the Lord;” and “What saith the Lord?” ought to be our sole inquiry.—But although our opinions and practice are not to be decided by names; yet the *manner of our treating* any subject not only *may* be, but *ought* to be, not a little affected by them. And when I think of the names of high eminence, both for intellect and for piety, both for scholarship and for integrity, that are ranged on both sides of the present controversy, I cannot but consider pertness and dogmatism as indications, not of vigour of judgment, but of the imbecillity of self-conceit.—If, through infirmity and corruption, I should, in any part of my argument, be found guilty of these evils, or of the appearance of them, I have thus pronounced a previous verdict against myself.—My aim, however, shall be, to avoid them, and to state my views and reasonings, although with decision and firmness, (because to this I do believe them, *bona fide*, to be entitled,) yet with becoming simplicity, self-diffidence, and charity.

I am not about to bewilder the reader’s mind by multifarious and protracted discussions,—by entering at large into all the topics that have been forced into

connection with this subject. It has long been my conviction, from observation of the writings of others, and from any little experience I have myself had in controversy, that in conducting an argument, the principal difficulty consists, not in finding *what to say*, but in knowing *what not to say*. The resolution to say all that *can* be said has often led to the introduction of a great deal of matter, that, if not altogether irrelevant, is yet but remotely and by slight association connected with the point in debate, and, being redundant, is enfeebling to the conclusion aimed at. There may be self-denial at times in using the pruning-knife; but it is necessary to a vigorous fructification. A skilful gardener, who wishes his tree to bear well, will lop off freely its green wood, and never think of encumbering the wall by training in every shoot that sprouts in the luxuriance of vegetation. He may sometimes be at a loss, which to cut, and which to spare: he must exercise his discretion: but he will never hesitate to cut, when to spare promises no produce. Branches that yield no fruit themselves will mar the productiveness of others.—The present argument has assumed much of the appearance of intricate complexity and difficulty; for which both sides of it are in some degree answerable. My present object is to *simplify*,—to divest the subject, as much as possible, of its multiplied incumbrances, and to present it in an easily intelligible form, and with as much brevity as its own nature, and the previous state of the controversy, will admit.

One ground of objection I must anticipate, and endeavour to remove, because it is frequently and confidently urged against all inferential conclusions, and all reasonings indeed together, on such a subject.—It is

alleged, that the case is one which does not admit of a process of reasoning;—one with which argument and inference have nothing to do. The ordinance of baptism, both in itself and in regard to the subjects of it, is a *positive institute*; and a positive institute cannot be established by reasoning, but requires, to warrant its observance, *explicit terms of institution*.

In reply to this view of the matter, let it be considered, *in the first place*;—If any thing can be made out from the word of God, as having Divine authority to support it, it is surely our duty to obey, *whatever may have been the mode of arriving at the conclusion*. Only make the *supposition* that we can show such authority for any practice;—we certainly can never consider ourselves as at liberty to decline compliance, because the point has not been made out exactly in the way which we had previously determined to be the only legitimate and right way. The simple and only question is *What saith the scripture?* not *In what way does the scripture say it?* It is not ours, in this or in any thing else, to prescribe to God.

Secondly: Those who make the objection may be fairly called to consider, how far the principle of it, if consistently applied and followed out, will necessarily carry them.—I am not going to take up the ground which by some pædobaptists has been assumed, that, on the principle of the objection, we have no express and explicit authority for the admission of *women* to the Lord's table;—because this has always appeared to me ground hardly consistent with manly fairness and candour, and calculated to enfeeble rather than to strengthen, to expose to a sneer rather than recommend to acceptance, the cause it is meant to

support. I have in my view a case of much higher order, not inferior in importance to the question of infant-baptism itself;—I mean *the sanctification of the first day of the week as the christian sabbath*.—The observance of a sabbath,—the consecration of a part of our time to the worship of God and to spiritual purposes, is not a merely *positive*, but a *moral* duty. But the *proportion of time*, and the *particular day*, are *positive*. It seems, however, impossible to ascertain the *change of the day* from the seventh to the first, and the *consecration of the whole day* to the Lord, without a process of induction, in many respects resembling that which is employed to vindicate the authority of pædo-baptism. I am myself, it is true, of opinion, with some eminent critics and expositors, that in the ninth and tenth verses of the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we have direct intimation and express authority for the change:—"There remaineth therefore a sabbatism,* (or the keeping of a sabbath) to the people of God: for he that is entered into his rest he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from his." But the establishment of this depends upon a process of reasoning; of reasoning too, which has never yet occurred to the minds, or settled the convictions, of the great majority of Christians: and I am free to say, that although I am perfectly satisfied as to the meaning of the passage, as an intended and explicit declaration of the change of the sabbath, yet, had it not been accom-

* The word in the original in this verse, rendered by our translators *rest*, is *σαββατισμος*; being different from the word so translated throughout the whole of the preceding and subsequent context,—which is *ἀναπαυσις*. Into the illustration of this interesting subject, or the discussion of the controversies connected with it, I cannot enter here.

panied with the commentary of *facts* in the recorded practice of apostolic times, we could not with confidence have founded our observance of the first day of the week on its exclusive authority. Even from the facts alluded to, we can only ascertain that on that day the disciples were accustomed to meet together for the worship of God, and the other sacred exercises of christian fellowship. But the *sanctification of the entire day*, as a day of "holy resting" from secular engagements, and of spiritual occupation and preparation for eternity, must be made out on other grounds. That it *can* be made out, and that most satisfactorily, I am thoroughly convinced; and I tremble for the interests of personal and social religion, in the individual mind, and in the christian society, where this conviction has begun to give way. Yet I am persuaded, that no anti-pædobaptist can set about proving the obligation of the sabbath, without adopting principles of reasoning, if not identically the same, certainly very closely analogous to those which he is accustomed to controvert, as inadmissible, when applied in support of infant baptism.

Thirdly: I hope to be able immediately to show, that the requisition, on the part of our baptist brethren, of a positive precept for our practice, is unfair; and that *we* are rather entitled to require such explicit authority from *them*. If we can succeed in establishing the previous existence of the connexion of children with their parents, under the same "covenant of promise" with that which constitutes the ground of fellowship in the christian church;—if, I say, we can succeed in this, then have we a title to demand *an explicit statute of repeal*. Explicit authority for *relinquishing* a practice,

is quite as indispensable as explicit authority for *commencing* one. But more of this by and by.

I must still further premise, because on all controverted topics I feel the essential benefit of *clearing my ground* as to the principles of reasoning;—that the question *is not at all about adult baptism*, or about the necessity, to the baptism of adults, of a profession of the faith. On this, baptists and pædobaptists are of one mind. When, therefore, the former adduce, in opposition to infant baptism, those passages of the New Testament in which the subject is the baptism of adults, and from them insist on the universal necessity of understanding and faith to baptism, they do nothing at all to the purpose. They are guilty of a sophism. They bring infants into their conclusion, whilst they are not in the premises. The illusion is very much of the same kind with one which abounds in the writings of Unitarians, who have an inveterate habit of adducing passages to prove that Christ is *not God*, which only prove that he *is man*;—as if to *prove his humanity*, (the point in which we agree with them, and which we are quite as desirous to establish as themselves,) were to *disprove his divinity*, (the point in which we differ from them, and which is not in the least degree affected by the evidence of his real humanity.) Antipædobaptists seem to be chargeable with the same description of fallacy, when they think to *disprove infant baptism* by *proving adult baptism*. Instead of establishing their own view of the subject on which we differ from them, they only establish (a thing quite unnecessary) a point on which we are perfectly agreed.—This observation narrows the limits of the field of argument; bringing the subject of dispute (which is always very desirable) into smaller

compass.—No one, I trust, will take groundless offence at my having named a class of theologians whom I consider as subverters of the gospel of Christ, in connection with those whom, notwithstanding our differences in sentiment and practice, I esteem, and love, and honour, as brethren in the faith. I have not compared the men—God forbid! I have not compared their views of divine truth. All that I have done has been, to point out the nature of one fallacy in argument, by comparing it with another of a similar description.

I have only further to observe, that, if the general views which I am about to present on this subject shall be fairly established from scripture, it is foolish to allow our minds to be easily startled and shaken by particular difficulties which may be suggested and urged, as to what would be right practice in certain supposed cases. Nothing can be easier than thus to perplex and puzzle the mind; and the mournfully prevalent abuse of the practice of infant baptism has given rise to cases of apparent difficulty, respecting which there may be hesitation and diversity of opinion, even amongst those who are of one mind as to leading principles. Were it a becoming mode of arguing, there are puzzles to be found for baptists, as well as for pædobaptists; although it may readily be admitted, without the smallest disparagement to the cause of the latter, that the abuse just referred to has given their brethren who are opposed to them an advantage for the invention of casuistical questions.

That indiscriminate admission to the ordinances of Christ which is involved in the very idea of a national religion, has produced, or at least maintained, a very general ignorance, or gross misunderstanding, of their

true nature:—and I would entreat any whose minds may have been startled on the subject of infant baptism by the grievous prostitution and abuse of it, and the various absurd notions entertained respecting it, to consider, that the other ordinance has been equally abused and prostituted; and that to suffer this, in either case, to shake their convictions and unsettle their practice, is the indication of a weak mind, in which feeling has the ascendancy over judgment, and which is incapable of discriminating between the precepts of God and the corruptions of them by men. The possibility, or even the existence, of particular cases of difficulty should never be allowed to take our minds off from the great general principles, when these have been satisfactorily established from the word of God. There are few of the doctrines of that word, however clearly revealed, to which objections have not occasionally been offered that may perplex our minds and “give us pause:”—but are we at once to renounce the faith, because, on some of its articles, a puzzling question may be put to us by a subtle adversary?

Our baptist brethren are abundantly ready to impute our views and practice to the power of educational prejudice, and of prevailing custom, which, when once introduced, goes on without consideration or inquiry,—and to assume, with rather more than enough at times of a happy self-complacency, the certain rectitude of their principles,—laying them down as settled points, and familiarly adducing, in conversation, the sentiments of those who differ from them, amongst their commonplaces of illustration, when speaking of the inveteracy of early prepossessions and habitual associations of ideas, and “astonished with an exceeding great aston-

ishment" at the dimness which on this subject rests upon the vision of minds that are otherwise clear-sighted and intelligent. "My persuasion is," says Mr. Cox, "that the *popular feeling* is theirs, the *argument* ours. "If an evidence of the latter were requisite, it might in part be deduced from the striking facts, that not only have the best pædobaptist writers made us repeated and most important concessions, while many, if not a majority, of their living teachers constantly admit one half at least of our arguments for the *mode* of baptism: but their churches contain vast numbers of theoretic baptists, who have discernment enough to appreciate the force of evidence, but not piety enough to pursue the path of duty."* Now this, it will not be denied, is somewhat provoking. That the "popular feeling" is ours, we do not deny; that in a vast number of instances it is *ignorantly* ours, we believe and regret; while the circumstances in which pædobaptism has been placed leave us at no loss to account for the fact. But that we have *none of the argument*, we cannot quite so readily concede; and we feel ourselves warranted to say, that the reasoning of Mr. Cox, to which the preface is prefixed that contains the preceding extract, ought to have been of a much firmer, more coherent, and more conclusive texture, to have warranted this lofty style. As to the christian charity of the allegation in the close of the extract, I leave the reader to judge of it; simply reminding Mr. Cox, that the charity which Paul so beautifully eulogises has for one of its features, that it "thinketh no evil."—That there may in our churches be *some* such hypocrites as he describes, is very possible;—and let them take

* Pref. to his Reply to Ewing, Dwight, and Wardlaw.

the reproof, and act accordingly: but his "*vast numbers*" only show us, that there are other *figures* besides arithmetical ones, by which the process of multiplication can be effected.—We certainly are not quite ready to submit to the alternative which is here imposed upon us, by which the whole multitude of pædobaptist professors is divided into two classes,—those who have "discernment enough to appreciate the force of evidence, but not piety enough to pursue the path of duty,"—and those who have "piety enough to pursue the path of duty, but not discernment enough to appreciate the force of evidence." We have the presumption to fancy, that a person may have both discernment and piety, and yet be a pædobaptist.—We desire, however, to be sensible of our danger. It is perfectly right that we should be reminded of it. We *are* in danger of doing, without thought, what our forefathers have done before us. Dissenters from established articles of faith, and nonconformists to established usages, are generally better acquainted with their principles than those from whom they differ. They are bound to assign a reason for leaving the beaten track; whilst those who follow it are apt to think it enough that it *is* beaten, and to move indolently forward. But the danger is not confined to one side. In proportion to the respective numbers of baptist and pædobaptist *families*, perhaps there may be found as many who hold their views from education, in the one communion, as in the other. And moreover, while the deceitfulness of our hearts should put us on our guard, on the one hand, against adhering to any practice from the *mere* force of custom; it ought, on the other, to make us jealous of the charms of novelty, lest we should too readily renounce a principle or an

observance, from fondness of change, or from the secret though unavowed wish to obtain a reputation for unusual candour.

Baptists and pædobaptists ought surely to yield to each other the claim of mutual sincerity. The contrary, while it springs from that self-sufficient confidence in our own judgment, which questions the possibility of others not seeing as we see, is, at the same time, highly inconsistent with that charity before referred to, which "thinketh no evil." And whilst the suspicion itself harboured in the mind, is a violation of the Saviour's law of love; the expression of such suspicion, in words or in conduct, tends to provoke a temper not less opposed to the spirit of that law, the passion of proud resentment and indignant disdain.—Surely fellow-christians know, how little need there is to stir one another's corruption. They sin deeply against Christ when they do so. And all expressions of contempt and bitterness have this effect, as well as the insinuated suspicion of insincerity. The whole of such treatment, besides, has the tendency to frustrate the very end which, in all our discussions, ought to be kept in view: for its effect is, to shut the eyes against the light of truth, and to summon up into action every principle than can resist conviction. "No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you; but I have understanding as well as you, I am not inferior to you,"*—is the language which all such treatment, and especially the display of self-sufficiency and scorn, naturally prompts us, with a return of similar feelings, to employ. And there can be no state of mind more unfavourable than this to the discovery and reception of truth.

* Job xii. 2, 3.

Thinking ourselves right, and thinking those who differ from us wrong, are expressions of equivalent import: and if we feel in the spirit of genuine brotherly love, we cannot but be desirous that our fellow-christians should discern and relinquish what are, in our apprehension, their errors. But let us beware of putting any thing in the room of CHRIST. Let us beware of refusing to acknowledge, in the character of "brethren beloved," any who give evidence that "Christ has received them." To a believer's mind, there is something inexpressibly awful, in the idea of his affections being confined within narrower limits than the love of Jesus;—of any consideration being a bar against admission into *his* heart, that does not exclude from the heart of his Divine Master;—of any being refused a part in his prayer for the household of faith, who are subjects of the Saviour's intercession within the veil!

Pitiably dreary must be the mind of that man, who can look round on the wide world, and count his dozen or his score, whom alone he can salute as brethren, or expect to accompany to heaven!—Far from me and from my christian friends be that self-sufficient bigotry, which freezes the fountain of love, and keeps the heart cold under the melting beams of the sun of righteousness!—While we seek the Spirit of Christ for the discernment of truth and duty, and for enabling us, meekly but firmly, to adhere to what we deem his revealed will; let us, on the point before us, and on other similar particulars, bear with diversity of judgment in those who "hold the head," and who give evidence, in their general character, that they do not resist or trifle with the authority of the same Lord—"both theirs and ours."

“ Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ IN SINCERITY !—whose love to him is not the faithless profession of lying lips, nor the lukewarm fickleness of a heart divided between him and the world,—but unfeigned, supreme, and constant ;—regarding its object in his true character, as the Divine and only Saviour ;—and evincing its reality by a life of holy obedience and unreserved submission to his will, —by a desire to know and to follow, in every thing, the light of his word !

Under the influence of such feelings as these, I desire to pursue the present discussion. I shall divide my argument into three general heads, and shall allot to each a distinct section :—

I. The divinely instituted practice, previously to the New Testament dispensation, and the absence of all evidence authorizing a departure from that practice under it :—

II. Evidence of the fact, that, instead of such departure being authorized, the children of converts to the faith of the gospel were actually baptized along with their parents, in the time of the apostles :—

III. The important truths and duties which the baptism of infants exhibits, and impresses upon our minds ; and the perfect consistency of the administration of this ordinance to them with all that the Bible teaches us respecting them, as subjects of salvation, and of the kingdom of heaven.



SECTION I.

IN this section, we are to consider THE DIVINELY INSTITUTED PRACTICE PREVIOUSLY TO THE NEW TESTAMENT DISPENSATION, AND THE ABSENCE OF ALL EVIDENCE AUTHORIZING A DEPARTURE FROM THIS PRACTICE UNDER IT.

We state our argument thus :—*Before the coming of Christ, the covenant of grace had been revealed ; and under that covenant there existed a divinely instituted connection between children and their parents ; the sign and seal of the blessings of the covenant was, by divine appointment, administered to children ; and there can be produced no satisfactory evidence of this connection having been done away.*

It is not my purpose to enter very largely into the wide field which these propositions, directly and indirectly, embrace. I shall endeavour, as briefly as I can, to establish the two following points :—1. That the covenant of promise made by God with Abraham was, in substance, the new covenant,—the covenant of grace,—the same covenant which, under a fuller, and clearer, and simpler discovery of it, forms now the basis of the christian church :—and, 2. That the ordinance of

circumcision, was connected with the Abrahamic covenant, in this view of it.

x 1. Of the first of these two propositions, that the covenant made with Abraham was the gospel covenant, the proof is, or ought to be, very short. It is the plain and positive declaration of an inspired apostle. The reader will find it in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, the 17th and 18th verses:—"And this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of God of no effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise."—I have never, I confess, been able to fancy to myself any thing plainer than this; and though much has been said and written calculated to involve the subject in mystery, here it stands as plain as ever. The covenant spoken of in these words *was not the law, or Sinaitic covenant*; for it existed four hundred and thirty years before it, and was not at all disannulled or set aside by it:—it was a covenant of *promise*, as opposed, in the apostle's reasoning, to any thing resting on the conditions of *law*:—it was "confirmed before of God *in Christ*,"—an expression which, translate it as you will, can be naturally applied to no other covenant but one:—and believers in Christ, under the New Testament dispensation, are declared, in the concluding verse of the same chapter, to be "heirs according to the promise" of that covenant. Take the three expressions, in the 16th, the 18th, and the 29th verses in connection, (for there is nothing in the intermediate statement and reasonings to disjoin them, but only links that bring them together) and this

will be strikingly apparent:—"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made:"—"If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise:"—"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye *Abraham's seed*, and *heirs according to the promise*."—Heirs of what? Of the inheritance promised, in the covenant, to Abraham and his seed. The covenant, therefore, contained the promise of the heavenly or eternal inheritance. But it contained no such thing, except as couched under the promise of the earthly, the temporal, the typical inheritance. Both the earthly and the heavenly, then, were the subjects of *promise*; and of both alike it is affirmed, that they were obtained and held, *not by law*, but *by faith in the promise*. Had it been otherwise, the type would have failed in one of the most important and interesting points of resemblance.—The same lesson is taught with no less plainness and decision, in Rom. iv. 13, 14. "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect."—It is needless to enlarge on the particular phrase here used, "the promise that he should be *the heir of the world*." It holds the same place in the reasoning in this passage, that the simpler designation "*the inheritance*" does, in the epistle to the Galatians. It will be admitted to include the promise of the *earthly* Canaan;—for the literal terms of the covenant specified it, and it alone; and it were strange if the inheritance specifically mentioned in the terms of the covenant, should not be meant at all when the promise of the covenant is spoken of:

and there can be as little doubt that in the apostle's reasoning the *heavenly* inheritance is assumed to be also included, since it is respecting it that his inferences and conclusions are drawn.—The covenant, then, which was “confirmed of God in Christ,”—which preceded the law by 430 years, and was entirely independent of it,—which was founded in free promise, in opposition to legal conditions,—and which contained amongst its promises that of the heavenly inheritance, of which New Testament believers are heirs;—this covenant must be in substance the same with the gospel, or the covenant of grace.



2. Our second proposition, and one of primary importance in the present discussion, is, that the rite of circumcision was connected with this covenant, as a covenant of spiritual blessings. I have dwelt the more briefly on the first, because the discussion of the second will serve further to illustrate and confirm it.

This second proposition appears to me as evident, as the terms of a plain historical narrative can make it. The following is the account of the matter in the book of Genesis :—“ And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God ; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face : and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram ; but thy name shall be Abraham : for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and

“kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my
 “covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee,
 “in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be
 “a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I
 “will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land
 “wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for
 “an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.
 “And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my
 “covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in
 “their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall
 “keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee;
 “Every man-child among you shall be circumcised.
 “And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin;
 “and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me
 “and you.” Gen. xvii. 1—11.

Such are the terms of the covenant to which the ordinance of circumcision was annexed, and which we affirm to be in substance the covenant of grace.—There are two theories of explanation, by which our baptist brethren have attempted to evade the conclusion to which this would lead. To each of these I must beg the reader’s attention.

1. The first of the two, and the more ordinary one, is that which alleges, that the covenant made with Abraham consisted properly of *two distinct covenants*, the one a covenant of *temporal* promises, the other of *spiritual*; the former having reference to the *natural*, and the latter to the *spiritual seed of Abraham*; and that it was with the *former*, and *not with the latter*, that circumcision was connected.

On this representation of the case let it be observed,

In the first place, that no such distinction appears on

the face of the narrative. Circumcision is enjoined, as the token of "*the covenant*," considered as comprehending *all the blessings* enumerated as pertaining to it. It is not said, that circumcision was to be the token of *that part of the covenant*, that engaged for temporal blessings to Abraham's fleshy seed; but of *the covenant throughout*, as exhibited in the above passage. There is nothing whatever in the simple statement of the history, not even the most remote insinuation, that warrants the introduction of the distinction in question.

Secondly: No such distinction is any where discernible *in the apostle's reasoning*. It is neither directly made, nor even incidentally alluded to. The blessings of the covenant in general, all its blessings, temporal and spiritual, and especially the two inheritances, the earthly and the heavenly, the typical and the typified, are there represented as alike given *by promise*, as obtained and held by *the same seed*, on *the same ground*. Gal. iii. 15, 16. "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: though it be but a man's covenant, yet, if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made: he saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."—What we have at present to notice is, not the promises themselves, or the seed to whom they were made, but the simple fact, stated in terms the most plain and unequivocal, that "*the promises*" of the covenant, without any hinted discrimination, were made to the *same seed* on the *same ground*.

Thirdly: The rite of circumcision itself is admitted by our baptist brethren in general, to be *significant of spiritual blessings*:—who, indeed, that attentively reads

either Old or New Testament, can question it? It is significant, according to a writer on that side of the controversy, of “cleansing from sin”—and “not only of the purity of moral holiness, but also of the cleansing from the guilt of sin in justification.” And agreeably to this spiritual import of the rite, we so frequently read of the “circumcision of the heart,” with other equivalent phrases; which the apostle finely explains, when he says, “He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”—Now it is not easy to perceive, with what propriety, or consistency, a sign, admitted to be significant of the highest spiritual blessings, should be made the seal, or the token, of a covenant of temporal promises and temporal blessings alone.—Consistency seems to require, either that the spiritual signification of circumcision should be given up, or that the covenant, of which it was the appointed token, should be allowed to have contained spiritual as well as temporal promises.

Fourthly: Circumcision is most expressly pronounced by the apostle, to have been a sign and a seal of spiritual blessings, and especially of that first blessing of the gospel covenant, *justification by faith*:—“Abraham,” says he, “received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:”—the meaning of which words evidently is, not that the sign of circumcision was to Abraham the seal of his own personal jus-

tification,—for this would be incompatible with subsequent *trial*, and with his “giving diligence,” like other believers, “to make his calling and election sure,”—inasmuch as it is impossible to arrive at a greater degree of certainty, than that which is given by the sealed testimony of God;—but rather, that it was the seal of that covenant, according to whose provisions, all sinners, believing as he believed, were, like him, to be justified by faith.—To *this* covenant, according to the apostle, circumcision was annexed.

Fifthly: The *temporal half* of the covenant is supposed, by those who hold this distinction, to have been *the same with the law or Sinai covenant*, which was entered into 430 years after with the people of Israel, the natural descendants of Abraham.—Now I must beg the reader to observe, how greatly this view mars the force, and invalidates the conclusiveness, of the apostle’s argument, with regard to the ground of Abraham’s justification.—His leading design, in those parts of his epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians where this subject is treated of, is to prove, for the establishment of Jewish and Gentile believers, for the conviction of his unbelieving countrymen, and for the refutation of false teachers, the doctrine of justification by grace, as having been, from the beginning, the doctrine of the word of God. He selects, as an instance to his purpose, the case of Abraham. He shows that this patriarch, in whom the Jews were wont to glory, was himself justified, not by the law, but on the footing of a covenant which was made four hundred and thirty years before it. Now, if this covenant be considered as entirely distinct from the law, the argument is perspicuous and conclusive. But it requires no great measure of penetration to perceive,

how much its force and decisiveness are impaired by the view which I am opposing; according to which, the law, instead of being 430 years after this covenant, and altogether distinct from it, was in fact co-eval with it, and formed one of its branches. I appeal to every candid and discerning mind, if this does not introduce confusion and feebleness into the apostle's reasoning. Surely, without some further explanations and distinctions, which he has not thought it necessary to introduce, it cannot be deemed a very appropriate or satisfactory inference,—that Abraham could not be justified *by the law*, because he was justified on the footing of a covenant of *which the law was a part*.

II. The second of the two theories of explanation, by which our baptist brethren parry the conclusion, deducible from the annexation of the rite of circumcision to a covenant of spiritual promises and blessings, is, distinguishing the different appearances of God to Abraham, recorded, respectively, in the twelfth, the fifteenth, and the seventeenth chapters of the book of Genesis, and representing them as having been, not repetitions of the same covenant, in different forms, under different circumstances, and with different degrees of enlargement and particularity of detail, but so many *distinct covenants*.—That which was made first, and which is contained in the twelfth chapter, is conceived to be the one referred to in the apostle's reasoning, as having been 430 years before the law, because, upon calculation, this time corresponds with the date of it, and, consequently, of it only. This is admitted to be the gospel covenant, containing the specific promise, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." That, on the contrary, of which we have so particular an account

in the seventeenth chapter, is conceived to be a covenant of temporal blessings only, and to bear relation solely to the fleshly seed or natural offspring of Abraham. To *this* covenant, it is alleged, circumcision was annexed, and not to the former; and it is it that is denominated "the covenant of circumcision."

This is the view adopted by the late Mr. Archibald Maclean in his Review of my Lectures on the Abrahamic Covenant. In his previous publications, he had avowed and argued upon the other. Whether, when he adopted this new theory, he had at all felt his former ground insecure, I will not presume to say. But although Mr. Cox, in his late Treatise, pronounces the Review a "masterly performance," and adopts, on the subject now before us, the ground on which it proceeds, it does, I confess, appear to me to be ground far less tenable than even the former. If the former was sand, this is quicksand.

The following is the brief record of the transaction in the *twelfth* chapter: "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." I have formerly quoted the terms of the covenant of circumcision in the *seventeenth* chapter. It ought to require no more than the simple reading of the two passages together, to satisfy any unprejudiced mind, that the latter, though not containing the precise words which are alleged to be the gospel promise, is

yet but an amplification of the former:—especially when it is considered, that the covenant recorded in the *fifteenth* chapter, on the statement of which the apostle founds his principal argument for the justification of Abraham *by faith* without the deeds of the law, does not contain the promise, on which so much stress is laid, that “in him and in his seed should all the families of “the earth be blessed.” It contains no more than the assurance of *the increase of his seed*:—“He brought “him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, “and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: “and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be. And he “believed the Lord, and he counted it to him for “righteousness.” Gen. xv. 5, 6. The gospel, then, must have been involved in the promise thus given and believed:—for it will not surely be disputed, that it was by the faith of *the gospel* that Abraham was justified.

But what most of all surprises me, in regard to this hypothesis, is, that that covenant which is supposed to be a covenant of temporal blessings only, to the natural offspring of Abraham, should be the very covenant of which the terms are most distinctly, and most frequently quoted, in the New Testament, with a spiritual interpretation. That Mr. Maclean should have been guilty of this oversight, affords, I fear, only one exemplification amongst many, of a defect to which even the acutest and most vigorous minds are liable, the unconsciously blinding influence of attachment to system.—But let me bring a proof or two of my position:—

1. Gen. xvii. 4, 5. “As for me, behold my covenant “is with thee, and *thou shalt be a father of many nations*. Neither shall thy name be called any more “Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a *father*

“*of many nations have I made thee.*”—It was not, a priori, probable, that the memorable circumstance, of the divinely intimated change of the patriarch’s name, should have been associated with any covenant inferior to that which contained the best and highest blessings; which God here, as in many other places, appropriately designates “my covenant.”—Accordingly, the very promise in the above verses is most expressly applied, by the apostle, to the spiritual seed of Abraham as the father of the faithful,—the spiritual father of believers in all nations:—Rom. iv. 16, 17. “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, *who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,)*” &c.—Nothing can be more explicit than this.

2. “And I will establish my covenant. between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, *to be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee.*”

As to *this* promise, which certainly sounds very like one of the “exceeding great and precious promises” of the new covenant, it is of essential consequence first of all to notice, that in whatever sense God promises here to be a God to Abraham, he promises, in the same sense, to be a God to his seed. The promise is one. No hint is ever given of his being the God of Abraham in one sense, and the God of his seed in another.—Now who are the seed to whom Jehovah thus engages to be a God? Surely the seed specified in the preceding terms of the covenant. And who are they? Have we not the answer given us by inspired authority, in the

apostle's interpretation of the words—"Thou shalt be a *father of many nations*." If this means, as Paul teaches us, his being the spiritual father of believers in all nations, then must not *these* be the seed of Abraham to whom he promises to be a God?—If objections are brought to this, they ought, I think, to be brought against the apostle.

The New Testament interpretation of the promise itself "I will be a God to thee," "I will be thy God," is in perfect accordance with this view of the seed to whom the promise is made.—Jehovah has been the God of his people, in every age, upon the same ground; and that ground is intimated by our Lord Jesus Christ to be their connection with him, when he says to Mary Magdalene, after his resurrection, "Go, tell my disciples, I ascend *to my father and your father, to my God and your God.*" John xx. 17 —The full import of the interesting designation may appear from the following passages of scripture:—

In Matth. xxii. 31, 32. Jesus concludes his reply to the Sadducees, respecting the resurrection and a future state, with these words, in evidence of his doctrine:—"But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."—From this passage it is evident, without entering into any discussion of the nature and extent of the entire argument, that, as *their God*, continuing and declaring himself such long after their decease, he had received their spirits to blessedness with himself, and also, as the resurrection of the dead was the subject in question, that he was to raise their bodies from

the grave,—to “show them the path of life,”—to put them in possession of those “pleasures which are at his “right hand for evermore;” and so to fulfil to them the promise of “everlasting inheritance.”

Compare with this passage, Heb. xi. 13—16. “These “all died in faith, not having received the promises, “but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of “them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say “such things declare plainly that they seek a country. “And truly, if they had been mindful of that country “from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned : but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : wherefore God is not “ashamed to be called their God ; for he hath prepared “for them a city.” The faith, and hope, and desire, of the patriarchs, are here represented as having for their object the heavenly country. This they expected to receive from God as *their God*, according to the promise of his covenant ; and we are assured, that *as their God* he would not disappoint their most enlarged and elevated hopes, founded as they were on his own word. “God is not “ashamed to be called *their God*, for he hath prepared “for them a city.” Can any inference be more simple or direct from such a passage, than that God *would have been* ashamed to be called their God, had he not provided for them *such a city* as is here referred to, the “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker “he himself is,” ver. 10.—that he would have been ashamed to represent himself in so endearing a relation to them, had the title been accompanied with the bestowment of a mere earthly inheritance—a temporal blessing only ; had he prepared for them any thing that

would have fallen short of their hopes, and failed to satisfy the utmost extent of their desires? The title and the gift would have been incongruous; as when a man raises our expectations by high professions of friendship, and then puts us off with a comparative trifle. His gifts are more worthy of himself, and of the relations which he has graciously assumed, and revealed himself as sustaining, towards his people.

This promise, indeed, "I will be thy God," is often expressed as a principal one amongst the engagements of the new covenant, and has ever been acknowledged and felt by his people, as "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ." In evidence of this, the reader may consult the following passages of the Old and New Testament scriptures; and, if he is well acquainted with his Bible, he will be able to add to them many more. Jer. xxxi. 33. xxxii. 38—40. Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24, 30, 31. xxxvi. 25—28. xxxvii. 27. Heb. viii. 10. 2 Cor. vi. 16—18.

It is no valid objection to this, that God is so often spoken of as the *God of the nation of Israel*; and that, in assuming this relation to them, as a nation, he represents himself as remembering his covenant with their fathers. Exod. vi. 4—8. Lev. xxvi. 12. &c.—It should be recollected, that the nation of Israel, springing from Abraham, in the line of Isaac and Jacob, was the *Church of God*. Now God has been the God of his church, collectively considered, and regarded as containing the true Israel, in the same sense, in all ages. I will not multiply passages in proof of this. Let the following, from the prophecies of Isaiah, serve as a specimen. Any reader, who is familiar with his Bible, will be able to add parallels to an almost indefinite extent.

Isa. xliii. 1—7. “ But now, saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord THY GOD, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, give up; and to the south, keep not back: bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth: even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.”

In these verses, there is a reference to what God had done, in manifestation of his love to his people, and of the value he set upon them; and there are, at the same time, promises of what he was to do for them in future times:—yet he speaks of himself as bearing the same relation to them all along—from the beginning to the end—when he “ gave Egypt for their ransom,” and when, in the latter days, he “ brings his sons from far, and his daughters from the ends of the earth:”—“ I am Jehovah THY GOD, the Holy One of Israel, THY SAVIOUR.”

It is worthy of particular notice, that the appearance of Jehovah to Abraham recorded in the seventeenth

chapter of Genesis, is *the only occasion on which this promise is made to the patriarch*. It is not to be found, either in the *twelfth*, or in the *fifteenth*, or subsequently in the *twenty-second*. If, therefore, the covenant in the seventeenth chapter was a covenant of temporal promises only, then this promise was never made to Abraham at all in its spiritual meaning; in that meaning which alone gave it real worth, in which alone it is applicable to the followers of Abraham's faith, and in which the New Testament scriptures explain and make so much of it! Is this credible,—is this possible?

3. "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession."—The question is not, whether this is a promise of the earthly Canaan. No one, I presume, ever questioned that. But is it a promise of the earthly Canaan *only*? That the promise of the temporal inheritance does, in one or other or all of its occurrences, include under it the promise of the eternal, must be very evident from this one consideration, that if it be not so, the eternal inheritance was never, so far as appears, promised *at all*. Yet it was upon the ground, certainly, of such promises as are actually recorded, that Abraham and the other believing patriarchs looked for the heavenly country. That they *did* look for it, we know; and it is equally sure, from the apostle's language in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, formerly quoted—that they founded their expectations on Divine promise:—"By faith Abraham sojourned in *the land of promise*, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the *same promise*: for,"—on the ground of that promise surely—"he

“looked for a *city which hath foundations*, whose builder and maker is God.” Heb. xi. 9, 10. The hope of the heavenly Canaan, then, was founded on the promise of the earthly, understood as typical, and comprehensive of higher blessings than the literal terms imported; and, at the same time, on the promise, “I will be thy God,” which also, as we have seen, included spiritual and eternal blessings.—Indeed the whole of the gospel revelation was then, and for ages afterwards, under the vail of figurative language, and of typical rites, objects, and events. To have given, in clear and explicit terms, the full promise of the eternal inheritance, would not have been consistent with the divine scheme of gradual development, nor with the fact of “life and immortality being brought to light by Jesus Christ.” But that the promise *was given*, is manifest from the apostolic representation, and from his saying elsewhere, respecting those patriarchs who, though they “*sojourned*” in the land of Canaan, received “*no inheritance in it*, no not so much as to set their foot on,” that on their following each other, by death, to heaven, “through faith and patience they *inherited the promises*.”—I might show the spiritual meaning of the phraseology in Gen. xvii. in some other particulars; but I am desirous to confine myself to such as are expressly interpreted in the New Testament scriptures.

From these considerations, it appears to me “passing strange,” that *this* should be the covenant (supposing it a distinct one from the rest) selected for degradation to a mere covenant of temporal promises to the natural offspring! The promises which it contains are evidently the same in substance with those given at previous appearances, only more amply un-

folded:—and that there is not the least necessity for considering every successive appearance as a distinct covenant, Mr. Maclean himself may be cited as authority: for, after intimating the propriety of following what he alleges to be the scriptural representation of the case, and taking up the communications recorded in the 12th, 15th, and 17th chapters of Genesis, as so many distinct covenants, he yet admits that the covenant confirmed by oath in the *twenty-second* chapter, at a period still later, was in substance the same as that in the *twelfth*, the earliest of all. But if we are warranted in considering the earliest and the latest as the same, we cannot surely be very far wrong in so considering the others that were intermediate.

It was with this covenant, then, which the apostle so explicitly declares to have been the covenant of grace, “confirmed before of God in Christ,”—that the rite of circumcision was connected.—There are some, however, of our baptist brethren, who readily admit the spiritual nature of the Abrahamic covenant, but declare themselves incapable of perceiving the legitimacy and conclusiveness of the inference we deduce from it, and who therefore regard all our reasonings in support of it, so far as the subject of baptism is concerned, as thrown away.—This has always appeared to me very surprising. If the connection between parents and children, recognised in that ordinance, had belonged only to the *old* or *Sinai covenant*, and if the ordinance of circumcision, instead of being “*of the fathers*,” had been exclusively “*of Moses*,” pertaining solely to that temporary dispensation of which he was the mediator,—we should then have seen a good reason why both the connection itself, and the ordinance that

marked it, should have ceased together, when the dispensation came to a close with which they were associated.—But if circumcision was “not of Moses, but of the fathers;”—if it originally pertained to a covenant that never “decayeth or waxeth old;” and if, under that covenant, children were connected with their parents in the application of the sign and seal;—then we must insist upon it, that the burden of proof rests upon our opponents. They demand of us express precept for our practice. We are better entitled to demand of them express precept for *theirs*. If the covenant made with Abraham be indeed God’s everlasting covenant of grace,—and if the sign and seal of this covenant was administered by God’s command to the children of those who professed the faith of Abraham, and to them in their turn became, as it had been to him, a “seal of the righteousness of faith”—(and who can deny that it was such to Isaac and Jacob, the “heirs with him of the same promise?” and if to them, why not to other believers?)—if these things, I say, be so,—then where, we ask, is any change in the constitution of the covenant in this respect pointed out? *When* were children excluded, and *by what law*? Let an express repealing statute be shown us, and we will immediately relinquish our practice. The alteration of an old constitution, or the setting aside of an old law, as was formerly hinted, requires an express precept, as much as the appointment of a constitution or law entirely new. To speak of the abolition, tacit or express, of the old economy, the Mosaic dispensation, is nothing to the purpose; because the apostle assures us, that the covenant of circumcision, so far from being a part of the law, and partaking of its temporary and

evanescent nature, was a covenant which existed long before it, which could not be disannulled either by its introduction or its cessation, but which continues to this day.—By confounding this covenant with the law, and including any part of its gracious provisions in “that which decayed, and waxed old, and vanished away,” you set the law “against the promises of God,” and throw into confusion and inconclusiveness the simple and beautiful reasoning of the apostle.—That the particular *rite* is changed we have abundant evidence; and satisfactory reasons for the change might be assigned.* But of any alteration as to the admission of children with their parents to the sign and seal and blessing of the covenant, we are destitute of evidence entirely. Nothing whatever can be produced in the form of a direct repeal; and as to the inferential reasoning which has been employed to set aside the previously existing connection, we shall have occasion to examine it in next section of this treatise.

I am aware, indeed, how frequently and how con-

* Besides its import as denoting the “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,” circumcision was, in all probability, intended as a sign that the seed, in whom all nations were to be blessed, *should come from the loins of Abraham*. Of this it was a significant emblem and remembrancer. The promise of the Messiah was restricted to the line of descent by Isaac. In this line, therefore, it became a memorial of the promise that Messiah should be made flesh amongst them. And I doubt not that, in other lines also of descent from Abraham, this rite, originally, by the command of God, administered to all his family, had its influence, in a general way, in preserving the idea and expectation of the promised seed. If this be well founded, we at once perceive a good reason why circumcision should be abolished *when this seed came*; and why another rite should be substituted in its place, which continued to signify as expressively, or more so, the “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,” while it was *not at all significant of that part* of the meaning of the former symbol, which had now received its fulfilment.

fidently it has been alleged, that the words of institution, as they have been improperly called (I say *improperly*, because baptism was *not* at that time first instituted, but had been practised before), involved a repeal, by declaring that none are to be *baptized* but such as are capable of being *taught*. The well-known words are: "Go ye, therefore, and teach (or disciple) all "nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, "and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching "them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.

The reply to this is simple and satisfactory; although I am sufficiently aware, how strongly a certain habit of mind, in viewing a particular passage, tends to prevent the clear perception of the validity of any reasoning, directed against the sense thus habitually and systematically affixed to it.—Suppose the ordinance of *circumcision* had been to continue, and the command had run in these terms,—“Go ye, therefore, and disciple all “nations, *circumcising* them in the name of the Father, “and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them “to observe all things,” &c. Had such language been used, we should have known that children were to be the subjects of the prescribed rite, as well as their parents; the previously existing practice would have ascertained this. Now, should we have been sensible, even with this knowledge, of the smallest impropriety, or inconsistency in the use of such language? Would it have appeared to us, in even the slightest degree, contradictory or incongruous? Would it have been understood by the apostles, as necessarily excluding children? Would they certainly have inferred from it, that although the *same rite* was to continue, there was

to be a change in the *subjects* of it?—that none now were to be circumcised but those who were capable of immediate instruction in the will of Christ, and practical compliance with it? No: there is nothing in the terms of the commission that could at all have led them to such a conclusion. They would, without hesitation, have gone on to circumcise children with their parents as formerly, teaching the parents the mind and will of Christ, and charging them to instruct their rising offspring. And if a commission to *circumcise*, given in these terms, would not have been understood as necessarily excluding children, it can never be shown that a commission in the same terms to *baptize* must have been so understood. The practical evidence that the apostles actually *did not* so understand it, will be afterwards considered.—In the mean time, permit me to observe, we have, in a parallel passage of scripture, most satisfactory evidence of the justness of these remarks. I refer to Gal. v. 2—5. “Behold, I Paul say unto you, “that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you “nothing. For I testify again to every man that is “circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of “you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”—In the 27th verse of the *third* chapter of the same Epistle, the apostle says:—“For as many of you as “have been baptized unto Jesus Christ (or, “ye, who- “soever have been baptized unto Jesus Christ”) have put “on Christ.” From this expression it has been very confidently argued, that *adults only were baptized*, because of “putting on Christ” *adults only were capable*.—Now, let this principle of interpretation, or of inference, be applied to the passage quoted from the *fifth*

chapter. It is an address *to adults* :—it expresses things of which *adults only were capable*. Are we, then, to infer from this, that *adults only were circumcised* ? We certainly ought, on the same principle on which we infer, from the other, that adults alone were *baptized*. There is precisely the same ground in the former case, as there is in the latter. Yet we know, that in the latter the inference would be contrary to fact ; for nothing can be more certain than that, when Gentile converts were circumcised, it was, in conformity with Jewish practice, *along with their children*. A principle of criticism, therefore, which, applied in one case, leads to a conclusion at variance with known facts, cannot with any fairness, nay, cannot without the risk, and more than the risk, of mistake and error, be applied in another.—The truth is, that the strict application of such a principle to language of this general kind, would lead us into innumerable absurdities.

I may here, by the way, take notice of a difficulty which has been suggested, from the passage which I have just quoted, in regard to the import of circumcision, and its identity under the one dispensation with baptism under the other. How, it has been asked, should circumcision exclude from the grace and blessings of the gospel covenant, if it was connected with that covenant, and signified the same thing with baptism ?*—But the moment we recollect to what description of doctrine the apostle is here opposing himself, the solution of the difficulty is at once apparent. It is the doctrine of those who taught the Gentile brethren, that, “ *except they were circumcised after the manner of*

* See Maclean, Rev. p. 21.

Moses, they could not be saved ;”—that “it was necessary,” namely, *to their salvation*, “to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” Acts xv. 1, 5, 24.—Now when, in such a connection, the apostle says, “*If ye be circumcised*, Christ shall profit you nothing,” it is equivalent to his saying, “*If ye embrace this doctrine*, Christ shall profit you nothing.” This is clear from the circumstance, that *being circumcised* in the one verse corresponds to “*being justified by the law*” in the other: in the one he says, “*If ye be circumcised*, Christ shall profit you nothing ;”—in the other, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you *are justified by the law*.”—He reminds them, therefore, that if they embraced this doctrine, they renounced the grace of the gospel; and that if they persisted in seeking justification by circumcision and the law, they should bear in mind what the law required of them in order to their attaining their end;—that nothing would suffice short of their “doing the *whole law*,” yielding to it a sinless obedience.—That such is the import of the phrase “*if ye be circumcised*,” is further evident from the case of Abraham and the original circumcision. Abraham was circumcised: but surely “Christ” did not therefore “profit him nothing;”—“he did not fall from grace.” So far from it, that his circumcision was the seal to him of the righteousness, not of works, but of faith—not of law, but of grace.—The Gentile Christians “being circumcised,” therefore, was not their mere submission to the rite, but their dependence upon it, in connection with the law of Moses, for justification: and no person, acquainted with the spirit of the apostle’s writings on this subject, will question the position, that, in similar circum-

stances, he would have said the very same thing of *baptism*, that he says of *circumcision*. He who now trusts for acceptance to his baptism, as effectually falls from Christ and from grace, as he who trusted of old to his *circumcision*.

Before closing this section, I may offer a few further strictures, on the reasonings of some of the opponents of *pædobaptism*, on one of the leading topics discussed in it,—the true nature of the covenant of *circumcision*, and the import of the rite as connected with it ; strictures, which I have reserved for this place, in order to avoid giving a disproportionate extension to one of the links in the chain of my own argument, by which the reader might have been in danger of losing sight of the connection. They will, however, serve to give further confirmation to the general principles which it has been my endeavour to establish.

Of the covenant in Gen. xvii. Mr. Maclean thus writes, contrasting it with the promise in the 12th Chapter : “ The first promise made to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. is termed ‘ THE COVENANT which was confirmed before of God in Christ,’ Gal. iii. 17. and contained “ a promise of blessing *all nations*, i. e. all Abraham’s “ spiritual or believing seed of Jews and Gentiles. “ But the covenant of *circumcision* did not include the “ Gentiles, but was a peculiar covenant with the natural posterity of Abraham, who were to receive the “ token of it in their flesh in infancy, as a people separated unto God from all others, and of whom “ Messiah was to spring. Christian baptism, therefore, “ is not founded on the covenant of *circumcision*, “ which was peculiar to the natural seed of Abraham ; “ but on that covenant which extends the blessing of

“ Abraham to his spiritual seed of all nations. Accordingly, when the ancient covenant of promise came to be actually ratified in the blood of Christ, the peculiar covenant of circumcision with the fleshly seed of Abraham was set aside, and baptism was appointed to be administered to all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who appeared to be his spiritual seed by faith in Christ, but to none else.” Review p. 104. I must here be permitted again to marvel, at the dimness of vision, and the confusion of ideas, which the admission of a false principle, and attachment to an erroneous system, can produce in even the acutest and most discerning minds. The promise of blessing to “ *all nations*,” is in the above extract admitted to mean, of blessing to “ *all Abraham’s spiritual or believing seed of Jews and Gentiles* ;” and yet that covenant is affirmed “ *not to have included the Gentiles*,” but to have been “ *a peculiar covenant with the natural posterity of Abraham*,” the very terms of which are expressly applied by the apostle himself to the “ spiritual seed of all nations ;” for thus, as we have seen, he explains the promise “ a father of many nations have I made thee.” —“ Christian baptism,” says Mr. M’L. “ is not founded in the covenant of circumcision.” True ; if the covenant of circumcision was indeed only a covenant of temporal blessings, peculiar to the natural offspring of Abraham. In that case, it *was* “ set aside ;” and Christian baptism *does* belong to a different covenant from that to which circumcision was annexed. But if, on the contrary, we have succeeded in showing, that the “ covenant of circumcision ” was indeed a covenant of spiritual as well as temporal blessings to the spiritual seed of Abraham, then have we not here Mr. Maclean’s

concession, that, instead of being "set aside," it still continues, and that Christian baptism is founded in it, and holds a similar place now, in connection with the same covenant, to that held of old by circumcision? This shows how much depends on a right view of the covenant in Gen. xvii. with which circumcision was connected.

But the amiable and excellent author of "EUGENIO AND EPIPHANES," takes quite a different view of this covenant of circumcision from Mr. Maclean. He admits its spirituality: and when circumcision is denominated "*the token of the covenant*," he considers the phrase of equivalent import with that other phrase used by the apostle, "*a seal of the righteousness of faith*."—"It was," says he, "the token of a covenant made with Abraham *as a believer*, and essentially connected with that *righteousness which was imputed to him by faith*. Hence the recollection of this covenant brought along with it the recollection of that faith in connection with which it was formed. And whatever could be properly denominated *a token of a covenant founded on a righteousness imputed by faith*, might, with equal propriety, be termed a seal, or standing memorial of that righteousness of faith with which this covenant was connected." Page 55.—I perfectly concur with Mr. Innes in the view which he gives, and in support of which he, in my opinion, successfully argues, of the meaning of the phrase "*a seal to the righteousness of faith*," as signifying, not a seal of the individual of personal justification, but a seal, or symbolical certification, and standing memorial, of the grand doctrine of justification by faith,—of which the justification of Abraham was, both to Jew and Gentile, the pattern or

exemplar. But this doctrine belongs to the new and everlasting covenant, and constitutes its fundamental article. Mr. Maclean, in the passage above cited, by affirming the connection of circumcision with the temporal covenant only, indirectly admits that, if it had been connected with the other, there would have been some ground for the inferences drawn by us as to Christian baptism;—for he makes the difference between circumcision and baptism to consist in the former being connected with the *old*, and *temporary* covenant, and the latter with the *new*, *spiritual*, and *everlasting* one.—Mr. Innes, on the contrary, connects circumcision with the spiritual covenant, that covenant according to which Abraham and all believers since have been justified by faith. But he is one of those referred to above, who, granting the premisses, do not perceive the legitimacy of the conclusion.—Baptists have sometimes said to pædobaptists, “You cannot be right; you differ so much amongst yourselves in your views of the subject?” They had as well be quiet on that score. It is but “foolish talking,” on both sides. Our sole inquiry should be after truth and duty. If one view of a subject be true, it is not the less true that another has been held.

Mr. Cox embraces Mr. Maclean’s *second* view of the covenant of circumcision. Whether he ever held the first I cannot say. But surely, never was there published to the world a statement more thoroughly at issue, in every point, with that of the apostle, than the following. After quoting the terms of the covenant, in Gen. xvii. 2—14,—for which see the preceding pages,—he thus comments:—“Let a person unbiassed by any “previous system, put into ordinary language the blessings covenanted in the above recited paragraph; let

“ him impartially state its entire import. Would he
“ not inevitably give the following interpretation?
“ Circumcision was the sign of a covenant with Abra-
“ ham and his posterity, denoting that it was the di-
“ vine purpose to increase his family to a remarkable
“ degree, that they should become a great nation, and
“ even be diffused far over the surface of the earth; to
“ manifest a peculiar and unalterable regard to his family
“ as their God, by the ample fulfilment of the agree-
“ ment which he now condescended to form with their
“ illustrious ancestor, and which stipulated their extra-
“ ordinary multiplication;—and to give them Canaan
“ for an inheritance. All persons, however attached
“ to the family, whether as children or servants, were
“ to undergo the prescribed rite, in order to distinguish
“ them from the surrounding nations, and to evince that
“ they belonged to the people whom God had especially
“ chosen. This token of association with Abraham, and
“ participation of his privileges, was, it appears, be-
“ stowed, irrespectively of personal character, conduct,
“ or faith; for the purchased slave received it as well
“ as the home-born child, whether a believer in the
“ God of Abraham or not, and simply as a part of his
“ domestic establishment. But tho’ they were to un-
“ dergo the painful rite, the promise of inheritance was
“ restricted to the posterity of the individual who stood
“ as their fœderal representative, and who, by this or-
“ dinance, were separated and distinguished from all
“ the Gentile nations.” *

Now, with regard to the nature and amount of
the blessings covenanted in the passage in question, I
must be allowed to prefer, as my interpreters, our

* Essay, 131, 132.

Lord and his apostles, to Mr. Cox. *They* were surely “unbiassed by any previous system;” and we have seen how very different from his are the views which they hold forth. Mr. Cox appears to adopt, as his principle of interpretation, the sense which any reader, taking up the passage, without any previous knowledge at all, would naturally attach to its phraseology. But the slightest reflection must satisfy him, that this is far from being a legitimate principle. In interpreting the Old Testament, the New, wherever it gives us direction, is our surest guide. Mr. Cox’s ignorant reader might no doubt understand Abraham’s being “a father of many nations,” *literally*;—but if the apostle Paul interprets it *spiritually*, which are we to follow? He would consider the “land of Canaan” as signifying the country on earth so denominated, and no more; but if Paul explains the promise of Canaan as inclusive of “the better country, \ even the heavenly,” the promise of which is not to be found at all, unless under this form,—and if, as he tells us, the patriarchs themselves so understood it, and founded their hopes upon it accordingly, which authority is to decide?—What idea might be affixed, by such a supposed reader, to the other promise, “I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee,” is not perhaps so easily determined. But, whatever it might be, the same question would still present itself; a question, the reply to which admits of no hesitation.

It will not surely be denied, that circumcision *could not be intended for a purpose which it never answered*. “The promise of the inheritance,” says Mr. C. “was restricted to the posterity of the individual who stood as “their federal representative, who, by this ordinance,

“ were separated and distinguished from all the Gentile nations.” He should have added, that it was restricted to this posterity, *in a particular line of descent*, namely, *by Isaac*. Now by the very circumstance of circumcision having been administered to so many others besides Isaac, it failed to serve the purpose thus assigned to it; it was no distinction of Abraham’s posterity by Isaac; but was common to them with other tribes and nations, sprung from the same stock, and yet having no part in the promise of the earthly inheritance. Might not this circumstance have suggested to Mr. Cox’s mind, that, connecting circumcision with the covenant of redemption, there was, in its administration to others besides Isaac, an intimation intended, that although, to serve particular purposes in the divine economy, the “ covenant was established with *him*,” yet its best blessings, were not to be confined to one portion of Abraham’s family, or even to his posterity at large, but were to extend to others also;—an intimation which continued to be given in the admission, by circumcision, to the church of God, of all Gentile proselytes professing the faith of Abraham.

That circumcision was administered to all the adult domestics of Abraham, without regard to any profession of the faith of their master, but “ simply as a part of his domestic establishment,” is a gratuitous assumption, needful, it may be, to the support of the baptist system, but of which there is no proof beyond the brevity of the history. There is not even this. All the proof that really exists is proof of the contrary. When Jehovah himself gives the character of his servant, as one whom he “ knew to command his children “ and household after him, that they should keep the

“way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment,” we must be permitted to consider it as a slander upon the father of the faithful, to suppose that there were any in his household uninstructed in the knowledge and fear of God; and if we are to judge of the rest by the specimen we have in the history,—Eliezer of Damascus, and Hagar the Egyptian, it will be no unfavourable estimate we shall form of the character of the inmates of his family. Let us not judge of the “friend of God” by the example of a West India slaveholder.*

Mr. Cox conceives, and very confidently says, that it is my “first and great mistake respecting the covenant itself, that perplexes the whole subject, pollutes “all the subsequent reasonings, and confounds together things which essentially differ.”—I agree with him, that if my view of the covenant of circumcision be a mistaken one, it must necessarily invalidate and overthrow the reasonings founded upon it. But it unfortunately happens, that the reasonings both of Mr. Cox and Mr. Maclean have settled me more firmly in the conviction, that the mistake and confusion are on *their* side, not on mine.—Mr. Cox denies the truth of my position, that circumcision “was a *sign* of the blessings bestowed in justification; representing the taking away of sin, both in its guilt and its pollution; that is, representing the two great blessings of justification and sanctification.” “Will Dr. W.” says he, “or any of his brethren, have the goodness to point out the phrases, which represent the *two great blessings of justification and sanctification*? Here is

* Let not the allusion be offensive to any one. I make it, because I have sometimes heard the one case adduced in illustration of the other.

“not only a general statement of the existence of a covenant between God and Abraham, but a specification of the design of that covenant, and the blessings of which it gave assurance to that eminent servant of God. Is *justification* mentioned? Is *sanctification* mentioned?” The reader, who has attended to the view before given, from the New Testament, of the promises of the covenant referred to,—the covenant of circumcision in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis,—will be at no loss for an answer to these questions. I know of no writer, indeed, unless it be Mr. Cox himself, who hesitates to admit the *spiritual signification* of the rite of circumcision; and that *he* really denies it, I have found it difficult to persuade myself, in the face of those expressions of scripture, which occur so frequently, and with which his mind is familiar:—such as, “Circumcise the foreskin of your heart;”—“All the seed of Israel are uncircumcised in heart;”—“Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter;”—“We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit;”—“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,”—&c. &c.—Strange as would have been the denial, in opposition to such phraseology, of the spiritual import of circumcision, yet had Mr. Cox been able to maintain it, it would have been consistent with his view of the covenant with which the rite was connected, as a covenant “solely of temporal blessings;” and, startled as I was, on finding him questioning whether circumcision at all *represented* spiritual blessings, I really thought I had found in him the first baptist whom I had known consistent with himself

upon this point. But “*nil fuit unquam tam impar sibi.*” —He says “I have already shown that the covenant of “circumcision included solely temporal blessings, and “that the rite was instituted to distinguish the “Jews from the other nations, and to show their “title to the land of Canaan.”* Had Mr. Cox, I say, been *able*, in the face of his Bible, to adhere to this simple view of the rite, his system, respecting the covenant to which it was annexed, might at least have been consistent with itself. But it will not do. After quoting the Apostle’s expression, respecting Abraham, —“he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the “righteousness of the faith which *he had* being yet uncircumcised,”—he says: “This language surely represents it as a token of his acceptance as a believer;—“a seal of *his* justification, *before* he was circumcised;—a public pledge that his faith was imputed to “him for righteousness, or that God accepted his “faith; and *an exhibition of the doctrine that their “faith should be imputed in a similar manner to all subsequent believers.* Thus it involved essentially a personal reference, *while it represented a general truth!*” And again, in remarking on my sentiment, that, whatever circumcision signified and sealed to Abraham, it must have signified and sealed also to Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:—“Undoubtedly Isaac and Jacob were co-heirs with Abraham, and “circumcision indicated to them what it did to *all* his “posterity; for indeed there is no reason for this discrimination in favour of these eminent patriarchs; “that is, it indicated to them their heirship by birth

* Page 137.

“ of the temporal promises, *and their equal participation by faith of the spiritual blessings !*”

From these premisses, the following strange anomalies may be directly deduced :—

1. The covenant to which circumcision was annexed, as its token, contained promises exclusively of temporal blessings ; and yet circumcision was to Abraham, personally, the seal or pledge of his possessing the first of spiritual blessings,—justification by faith :—

2. The covenant of circumcision contained nothing in it of the “ two great blessings of justification and “ sanctification,”—and the rite was instituted simply “ to distinguish the Jews from other nations, and to “ show their title to the land of Canaan :” yet circumcision, connected as it was with this temporal covenant only, “ represented the general truth” of justification by faith ; being “ an exhibition of the doctrine that “ their faith should be imputed in a similar manner to “ all subsequent believers,”—and “ indicating to Isaac “ and Jacob, and to all the posterity of Abraham, “ their equal participation by faith of the spiritual “ blessings :”—

3. Abraham obtained his justification, and all the blessings of salvation connected with it, on the ground of the Gospel covenant, or covenant of grace ; yet the sign which he received, and by which these precious blessings were pledged to him, had no connection at all with that covenant, on the ground of which he obtained them :—and believers in all ages are designated “ *the circumcision,*” although the rite, from which they obtain the designation, not only was not spiritual in itself, (which no rite can be) but did not even signify any of those peculiar blessings by which they are dis-

tinguished, nor bear any relation to the covenant whose promises are fulfilled in the bestowment of them!

Nor are the sentiments of Mr. Maclean on this subject more self-consistent than those of Mr. Cox.—He considers (as we have before seen) the covenant, of which we have the record in Gen. xii. as essentially distinct from that in Gen. xvii. The former alone he regards as the gospel covenant, the latter as containing exclusively promises of temporal blessings to Abraham and his natural offspring. But he has not only the difficulty to contend with, how it should come that the token annexed to a covenant of temporal promises, should be, to Abraham himself, the seal of the blessings of the higher and better covenant;—his system is embarrassed with another difficulty. He admits that “both circumcision, and the temporal promises “to which it was annexed, had also a mystical or typical sense:” that “circumcision and what pertained to it had both a *letter* and a *spirit*, or a *literal sense* in relation to the fleshly seed of Abraham, and “a *mystical* or *typical* sense in reference to his spiritual seed.”*—Now, without pressing on this acute writer, the inconsistency of reasoning in support of the *second* of his two successive theories, in terms that are applicable only to the *first*,—I would merely observe: It is here admitted that the covenant in Gen. xvii. contains promises;—that these promises have a mystical or spiritual sense, as well as a literal and temporal;—and that circumcision, the token of this covenant, has a similar spiritual as well as literal meaning:—I have then to ask—Are the blessings contained in this

* Review, pages 22, 23. *et passim*.

covenant to be considered as *promised in the mystical or spiritual sense*, as well as in the literal and temporal? If they be; then does it not become, *bona fide*, a covenant of spiritual as well as of temporal promises; only that, in the former sense, the promises are made in reference to the spiritual seed, and in the latter to the natural?—and does not circumcision, as annexed to such a covenant, and itself possessing a mystical as well as a literal meaning, become the token of the covenant in its spiritual as well as its temporal import? And does not this effectually subvert the distinction contended for between the *different covenants* (as they are alleged to have been) with Abraham?—especially when three things formerly adverted to are recollected;—*first*, that the faith by which Abraham is declared to have been justified is the faith of *one* of the promises in the covenant of circumcision, namely, that of the multiplication of his seed—See Gen. xv. 5, 6: *secondly*, that believers in all ages are represented as being heirs according to *another* of its promises, namely that of the inheritance of Canaan; for under no other form is the promise of the “better country” ever given in the divine communications with Abraham; See as before, Gal. iii. 18—29:—and *thirdly*, that *another* still, a *third* of its promises, and one of which so much is made in the New Testament,—that of Jehovah being “his God and the God of his seed,” is nowhere to be found at all, in any covenant with Abraham, except here.

I have formerly (page 22.) stated my conviction that the promises of the “covenant of circumcision,” considered as including both temporal and spiritual bles-

sings, were made, the one and the other alike, to the same seed, on the same ground ;—and that there is no distinction recognized, either in the narrative or in the reasonings of the Apostle, between the two kinds of promises, as if the one had been made to the natural seed, and the other to the spiritual.—I believe both to have been made, (because the Apostle, by speaking of the promises of the covenant indiscriminately, in effect says so,) to the *spiritual seed* ; whilst there was, at the same time, a *primary respect to the natural offspring*, amongst whose successive generations that seed was, by divinely appointed means, and especially parental instruction, to be raised up.

Had Mr. Cox understood my positions, or at all attended to them, he could never have written as follows :—“ The statement, that both promises are bestowed on the same seed and on the same footing, is equally erroneous. Dr. Wardlaw will never, surely, attempt to prove that all the seed of Abraham according to the flesh were partakers of salvation—that they were all justified and sanctified ! If the promises of the covenant of circumcision were temporal, they were fulfilled ; if they are supposed to have been spiritual, they were not accomplished.”*—To the same purpose he elsewhere quotes Mr. Kinghorn as saying—“ Surely none will maintain that God engaged to bestow special spiritual blessings on all the natural seed of Abraham ; for this was not the fact in any age ; and we cannot imagine the covenant intended to point out what was not fulfilled.”†—This way of representing the case is very common with

* Pages 143, 144.

† Page 133.

Baptists: but they are chargeable in it with a glaring oversight. They forget, that to *all* the natural seed of Abraham, even in the line of Isaac, the *temporal* promises were not fulfilled, any more than the *spiritual*. They forget, that for nearly five hundred years from the time of the promise, not a soul of Abraham's posterity inherited a foot-breadth of Canaan; and that now, for more than seventeen centuries, it has been given to the Gentiles, the seed of the father of the faithful being utterly dispossessed of it.—So far am I from fancying the covenant “intended to point out what was not “fulfilled,” that I do not see any satisfactory ground, on which the faithfulness of God to the promises of the covenant, *whether temporal or spiritual*, can be fully and clearly vindicated, but that which the Apostle takes up, that “*they are not all Israel who are of “Israel.*”—Let us recollect the occasion on which he introduces this distinction. He supposes the objection might be made to his statements, respecting the casting off of the Jewish people for their unbelief and rejection of the Messiah, that it would be a violation of the divine promises, which were made to Abraham and his posterity. When he first mentions this difficulty, he does not give the solution of it, but only rejects, with indignation, every possibility of God's failing in his word:—“For what if some did not believe? shall “their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without “effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, though “every man should be a liar,” Rom. iii. 3, 4.—But he afterwards resumes the subject, and states the *principle* on which the divine veracity is cleared of impeachment. Having expressed, in the beginning of the ninth chapter of the same epistle, his “great heaviness and

“ continual sorrow of heart for his brethren, his kins-
“ men according to the flesh,” anticipating no doubt the
impending judgments of God, and their ejection from
his church, he adds, verses 6—8. “ Not as though
“ the word of God hath taken none effect ; for they are
“ not all Israel, who are of Israel : neither because they
“ are the seed of Abraham are they all children ; but in
“ Isaac shall thy seed be called : that is, they who are
“ the children of the flesh, these are not the children of
“ God, but the children of the promise are counted
“ for the seed.”—It is evident, that in this ground of
vindication, the principle is assumed, that the pro-
mises of a faithful God must be fulfilled, in the sense,
and to the extent, in which they were made. Had the
promises been made to all the natural posterity of
Abraham, as such,—then to all of them, as such, they
must have been verified ; and the “ casting off” of the
unbelieving Jews from the privileges of the church, and
from the possession of the earthly inheritance, would,
the Apostle tacitly admits, have been at variance with
the truth of God. But the distinction which he intro-
duces reconciles the facts with the promises, showing
that their accomplishment extends to all to whom they
were originally made.

If it should be objected to this, that the *spiritual seed*
have been deprived of the earthly Canaan as well as
the *natural offspring*, and that, therefore, the promises,
in their temporal sense, have not been fulfilled to the
former universally, any more than to the latter ;—I
answer, *first*, that the difficulty attaches to both sides
of the present question, and therefore ought not to be
vehemently urged by the one or the other against its
opposite ;—and *secondly*, that the simplest principle of

solution seems to be, that believers, since the coming of Christ, are "inheritors of the promises," in the same sense in which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob themselves were, in which Moses and Aaron were, in which all the saints were, previously to the actual possession of Canaan. If the instances that *preceded* its occupation be not valid exceptions, neither are those which have *followed* it,—or rather, perhaps, I should say, which intervene between its forfeiture and its re-occupation. Individual Jews, who are brought to the knowledge of Christ, come to be heirs of the promises in their higher sense, the less blessing being absorbed, as it were, in the greater, till "the Deliverer shall come to Zion, "and turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Not, however, that the temporal promise is, to the people of God, done away. Godliness has "the promise of the "life that now is," as well as of "that which is to "come:" and those who "seek first the kingdom of "God and his righteousness," have the assurance that "all these things"—namely, the needful blessings of this life,—"shall be added unto them."

These observations, respecting the seed, to whom the *temporal* inheritance was promised as well as the *eternal*, are in full harmony with the ground on which, according to the statements of scripture, the earthly Canaan was *obtained*, and *held*, and *lost*. It was obtained by faith; by faith it was held; and it was lost by unbelief.

1. What was the reason why the race that came out of Egypt by Moses did not enter Canaan?—what was the cause of their exclusion?—It was *unbelief*;—unbelief of the promises of God to their fathers; which promises, as we have already seen, contained

the gospel, in the state of its revelation at the time. This is plainly declared, Heb. iii. 18, 19. "To whom" sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but "to them who believed not? So we see, that they could "not enter in because of unbelief:" and chap. iv. 2. "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto "them: but the word preached did not profit them, not "being mixed with faith in them that heard it."—The unbelief, thus imputed to this proscribed generation, was not unbelief of the statements of those who had been sent to search the land. For if, in the representation of these, there was any material difference between Caleb and Joshua on the one hand, and the remaining ten on the other, certainly, as far as respected human testimony, the Israelites could not have been greatly to blame, for receiving the declaration of ten in preference to that of two. But it was unbelief of the declarations and promises of *God*, made by Him to their fathers, respecting that land; and, consequently, distrust of his veracity and his power, accompanied with rebellious complaints and murmurings. It amounted to a rejection of the word of God and the promises of his covenant,—a rejection of God himself as the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was a denial of his faithfulness, not in the promise of Canaan only, but in all the promises respecting the seed of Abraham, connected with it, and dependent upon its fulfilment. These "sinners against "their own souls" were, doubtless, unbelieving and proud despisers of all that the God of their fathers had engaged by covenant to do,—of the accomplishment of which their own deliverance, by signs and wonders, from Egyptian bondage, was a prelude and a pledge.

They were unbelievers of the Gospel, as then revealed in the promises of the covenant made with Abraham.

2. It is true, that the Israelites are spoken of as continuing to hold the land of Canaan in possession, *through obedience*. But by this obedience we must understand the *obedience of faith*. I say, we *must* so understand it, not because it is necessary to the making out of our present argument, but because the principles laid down by the Apostle, respecting the possession of the inheritance, indispensably require it. “If the inheritance be of the law,” he says, “it is no more of promise :”—“if they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect.”—These expressions stand in perfect opposition to the idea of the land of Canaan ever being held on the ground of law, or as the merited reward of legal obedience. And there are, accordingly, many passages, in which the obedience required of Israel is described as being much more than mere outward subjection; as being nothing less than inward spiritual principle, manifested in external conduct;—that is, in other words, the obedience of faith. Let the reader, who is desirous to ascertain the truth of this or the contrary, consult Deut. x. 12—22. and vi. 1—19; and, as illustrative of the reasons of Divine judgments and of restoration from them, the whole of the thirtieth chapter of the same book.—If any choose to say, that their obedience was the *condition* of their continuing to enjoy the promised blessings, my approving or disapproving of the expression, (which is ambiguous, and therefore improper) depends on the meaning which it is intended to bear. If by *condition* be

meant *meritorious ground* or *procuring cause*, I decidedly object to the statement, as contradictory of the Apostle's. But if by obedience being the *condition* of enjoying the blessing, nothing more is intended, than its being *essentially requisite*, a *sine qua non*; then the expression conveys an important truth,—a truth as applicable to us as to them:—for there is no enjoying the blessings, of any kind, which God has promised, but in the way of obedience to his commandments, under the influence of “faith working by love.” It is equally a truth that “by grace we are saved,” and that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord;”—that “eternal life is the gift of God,” and yet that we must “seek for glory, honour and immortality, by “a patient continuance in well doing.”

3. The reason why the Jews were at length, with such awful judgments, cast out from the land of promise, corresponds with these views. It was *unbelief*—rejection of the person and Gospel of the Son of God.—“Because of unbelief they were broken off,” says Paul, “and thou standest by faith”—Rom. xi. 20. Moses, many hundred years before, had denounced curses upon them if they should be *disobedient*. These curses were fulfilled, on account of their *unbelief*. And this shows us what kind of disobedience was the ground of his denunciations, delivered in the name of the God of truth.—See the following passages: Luke xix. 41—44. Mat. xxiii. 34—39. 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. Acts iii. 23. &c.

Thus it appears, that the promise of the inheritance was originally through faith; that it was as professors of Abraham's faith that the Israelites entered on the possession of Canaan; that the possession was con-

tinued through the obedience of faith ; and that on account of their disobedience—disobedience springing from unbelief and including it—judgments were threatened and inflicted ; that by faith the inheritance was obtained ; that by faith it was held, and that by unbelief it was lost.

I have said, that, whilst the promises of the covenant with Abraham were made to the patriarch and his spiritual seed, there was in them at the same time a *primary respect to his natural offspring*, among whose successive generations that seed was to be raised up. This observation is of essential consequence to our present subject ; and I have yet seen no reason to shrink from the position. The following is the argument of my former publication, referred to in the preface, in support of it.

“ It has been said, that ‘ if spiritual blessings were
 “ promised, in that covenant, to the fleshly seed as
 “ such, then it behoved all the fleshly seed to possess
 “ them, and to be saved ; which is contrary to fact,
 “ and therefore inconsistent with the faithfulness of
 “ God.’ Those who make this objection, conceive
 “ the temporal promise to have been made to the fleshly
 “ seed, and the spiritual promise to the spiritual seed.
 “ It ought to be remembered, however, that, the
 “ reasoning which holds good as to the spiritual promise, is, in point of fact, equally conclusive as to
 “ the temporal. ‘ If the land of Canaan, and its temporal blessings, were promised by God to the fleshly
 “ seed of Abraham *as such*, then it behoved all the
 “ fleshly seed to inherit and enjoy them, which is contrary to fact, and therefore inconsistent with the

“faithfulness of God.’ The truth is, as I have attempted to show, that neither the one promise nor the other was made to the fleshly seed, *merely as such*; and that the principle, ‘they are not all Israel who are of Israel,’ is the only principle, on which the Divine faithfulness can be, in either case, vindicated and maintained. ‘What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faithfulness of God of no effect? God forbid.’

“This view is by no means at variance with the idea of that *primary respect*, of which I now speak, as being had, in the promise, to the natural offspring; a respect, not merely primary according to the order of *time*, but according to a *peculiarity of regard*, and according to what may be termed the *natural course of things*.—That any peculiar regard or favour is shown to children on account of their parents, is by many strongly denied; as being inconsistent with the freedom of Divine grace. But that God does show such regard to children, for the sake of their parents, we find both intimated and exemplified, in many parts of the scripture history. God represents himself* as ‘visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, and showing mercy unto thousands (of generations) of them that love him and keep his commandments.’ Now, without entering into any discussion of the precise or full meaning of these expressions, I would merely remark, that the latter surely cannot be considered, as less consistent with the freedom of mercy, than the

* Exod. xx. 5, 6.

“ former with the strictness of justice.—There is an
 “ expression also used by Paul, respecting the Jews in
 “ their present state of unbelief, which appears to me
 “ inexplicable, except on some such principle:—‘ As
 “ touching the election,’ says he, ‘ they are *beloved for*
 “ *the fathers’ sakes.*’* If a peculiarity of regard is not, in
 “ these words, expressed towards the natural ‘ seed of
 “ Abraham, God’s friend,’ for the sake of him, and
 “ of their other godly fathers, with whom Jehovah
 “ established his covenant, I am at a loss to imagine
 “ what meaning the expression can have.

“ Besides: in the idea suggested there is nothing in-
 “ consistent with the free operation of Divine grace;
 “ because, this grace, in its various blessings, be-
 “ ing conveyed to sinners *by means*, it is quite ac-
 “ cording to the natural order of things, that it should
 “ accompany those means, and flow with them, as it
 “ were, in the same channel. If, therefore, the know-
 “ ledge of God, the means by which the blessings of
 “ salvation come to be enjoyed, was appointed to be
 “ conveyed from generation to generation, we must
 “ suppose the blessings to be conveyed along with it,
 “ and the conveyance of the blessings, to be the grand
 “ design of the conveyance of the knowledge. There
 “ is no other design, which we can imagine God to
 “ have had. And, therefore, although the grace of God
 “ is not imparted by fleshly birth, all being ‘ conceived
 “ in sin, and brought forth in iniquity;’ yet, that
 “ when God’s people are attentive to the means ap-
 “ pointed, this grace should appear descending through
 “ their generations, cannot at all be matter of wonder,

* Rom. xi. 28.

“ If God has been pleased to make the promises of his
 “ covenant, with a *primary reference* to the generations
 “ of his people, as the line in which, by the communi-
 “ cation of the knowledge of his name, the blessings of
 “ his grace should flow, (though not to the exclusion
 “ of others from being, in his sovereign pleasure,
 “ brought within the bond of his covenant;) and if, in
 “ the token of his covenant, he has given his people
 “ encouragement, to indulge the believing expectation,
 “ of his mercy being imparted, through the use of ap-
 “ pointed means, to their offspring, as well as to them-
 “ selves; it becomes a very serious matter, to treat this
 “ encouragement, which regards the dearest and most
 “ interesting of all concerns, to a believing parent’s
 “ heart, with indifference or neglect.

“ That the promise had a *primary* respect to the
 “ fleshly seed of believing Abraham, implying as its
 “ *first* import, not indeed that *all* his fleshly seed should
 “ be saved, but that amongst them there should be a
 “ seed to serve the Lord, may, I think, be established
 “ from the following passages of the word of God.

“ 1. Gen. xviii. 17—19. ‘ And the Lord said, shall
 “ I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing
 “ that Abraham shall become a great and mighty na-
 “ tion, and all the nations of the earth shall be
 “ blessed in him? For I know him, that he will
 “ command his children and his household after him,
 “ and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do jus-
 “ tice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon
 “ Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.’

“ The most inattentive reader will perceive, that, in
 “ this passage, the character given of Abraham is con-
 “ nected with the fulfilment of God’s promise to him.

“ It is equally obvious, that the authoritative instruction
 “ of his family could have no influence in accomplishing
 “ the promise of a *carnal* but of a *spiritual* seed. His
 “ acting in the manner described was the means, by
 “ which God verified his word; giving him such a seed,
 “ from among his natural offspring, by the communica-
 “ tion of the knowledge of God to his family, and from
 “ them downwards, through successive generations. By
 “ this means, God ‘brought upon Abraham that which
 “ he had spoken of him;’ proving ‘a God to him, and
 “ to his seed after him *in their generations.*’ And in the
 “ same manner, ‘the generation of the upright’ continu-
 “ ed to be ‘blessed’—‘God’s righteousness being to
 “ children’s children, to such as kept his covenant, and
 “ remembered his commandments to do them.’

“ II. Rom. xi. 1. ‘I say then, hath God cast away
 “ his people? God forbid! For I also am an Israelite,
 “ of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.’—
 “ The Apostle here begins to prove, that God had not
 “ cast off his people. And what is the first considera-
 “ tion, which he suggests? That he himself, whom God
 “ had blessed with salvation, was a descendant of Abra-
 “ ham, *after the flesh.* For, that he speaks of fleshly
 “ descent, is plain, from his mentioning ‘the tribe of
 “ Benjamin,’ along with ‘the seed of Abraham.’

“ Two things may be observed from this passage. 1st.
 “ If there had not been such a primary respect to the
 “ fleshly seed, as I am endeavouring to establish; the
 “ salvation of one belonging to the fleshly seed, could
 “ never, with propriety, have been adduced, as any pe-
 “ culiar or appropriate evidence, that ‘God had not
 “ cast away his people.’ The salvation of a Gentile
 “ would have been quite as much to the purpose; the

“ ‘election’ among the Gentiles being *the people of God*,
 “ as well as among the Jews. And the Apostle might
 “ have quoted the case of Cornelius, or of the Philippian
 “ jailor, with as much conclusive effect, as his own. 2dly.
 “ It seems equally evident, that, while there was a pri-
 “ mary respect to the natural seed of those to whom the
 “ promises were made, these promises never implied,
 “ that *all* who should descend from them, by fleshly
 “ birth, should partake of the blessings. For of this,
 “ the salvation of an individual, or of ‘ a remnant ac-
 “ cording to the election of grace,’ however numerous,
 “ would have been a proof totally inconclusive.

“ III. Jer. xxxi. 31—33. Heb. viii. 8—10. ‘ Behold
 “ the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new
 “ covenant *with the house of Israel and with the house of*
 “ *Judah* ; not according to the covenant that I made
 “ with *their fathers*, &c. For this is the covenant which I
 “ will make *with the house of Israel*,’ &c.—When we con-
 “ sider what is so often repeated in the New Testament,
 “ respecting the gospel, or new covenant, as being ‘ *to*
 “ *the Jew first*,’ the meaning of these passages appears
 “ sufficiently obvious. They represent the new covenant
 “ as made with *the same people*, with whom the old was
 “ made,—‘ the house of Israel,’—the natural seed of
 “ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And this was fulfilled,
 “ when ‘ *to them first*, God, having raised up his Son
 “ Jesus, sent him to bless them, in turning away every
 “ one of them from their iniquities,’ Acts iii. 26. These
 “ words immediately follow an address of the Apostle
 “ Peter, to the unbelieving Jews, which appears to put
 “ this matter beyond a doubt : ‘ Ye are the children of
 “ the prophets, says he, and of the covenant which God
 “ made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in

“thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’
 “From this arises the encouraging declaration immediately added, ‘Unto *you first*,’ &c. If there had been, in the promises, no such primary reference, of peculiar regard, to the fleshly seed, I am at a loss to conceive, in what sense the Jews here addressed, who had no relation to Abraham but that of carnal descent, could be denominated the children of the covenant made with the fathers, not as containing the promise of temporal blessings only, but the promise of the glorious gospel of the blessed God.—‘To them (says the Apostle, in the ninth chapter of this epistle, speaking of his “kinsmen according to the flesh,”) ‘to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the *covenants*, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the *promises*.’

“If this *primary respect* to the fleshly seed be admitted, it is all that I desire to establish in behalf of the carnal relation.”

Mr. Maclean’s strictures on this reasoning have only served to establish me in the conviction of its truth. He first “freely admits, that the promises made to Abraham had a *primary* respect to his natural offspring.” “But,” he adds, “on this subject we must distinguish Abraham’s natural offspring into the *children of the flesh* and the *children of the promise*, and also the promises themselves into *temporal* and *spiritual* :—and from the laying down of this usual distinction, any reader that has the slightest portion of sagacity, and of acquaintance with this controversy, might anticipate the manner in which it is applied.—The sagacity of the same reader, however, may enable him to perceive, that the whole of my argument and

illustration regarded the *primary respect* of the *spiritual promises* to the *fleshly seed*. I should have been doing a very useless thing indeed, had I set myself to prove the primary reference to this seed of the *temporal promises*; for I should have been proving what no one questioned. Now, what I *have* contended for, Mr. Maclean in substance admits: “As to the *spiritual* “promises which are included in the blessing of Abraham, such as justification, the promise of the Spirit, “the true adoption of sons, &c., these had also a “*primary*, though not a *peculiar* or *exclusive* respect to “Abraham’s natural offspring. That they had not an “*exclusive* respect to them, is clear from the very words “of the covenant with Abraham on which the Apostle’s argument is founded, viz. ‘In thee,’ or ‘in thy “seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,’ “which includes Gentiles as well as Jews, Gal. iii. 8, “14, 16, 17, 28; and with this the facts recorded in “the accomplishment of that promise fully agree.”*

These positions he proceeds to establish, much in the same way as I have myself done above. And when he subjoins, “Thus the spiritual promises had a *primary* respect to the natural offspring of Abraham. “But as the bulk of that nation rejected Christ when “he came, and persecuted his followers, neither their “being the circumcised seed of Abraham, nor their “national relation to God by the Sinai covenant, could “entitle them to the privileges of the free sons and “heirs; and so they were, like the bond-woman and “her son, cast out of God’s house”:—he says what I heartily subscribe to. The distinctions made are essential to my own argument.

* Review, p. 88, 89.

Mr. Maclean labours hard with the passage Rom. xi. 28. "As touching the election, they are *beloved* "for the fathers' sakes."—After stating his objection to its being understood as implying any regard, in the bestowment of spiritual blessings, to the character of their godly progenitors,—namely, the apparent inconsistency of such a sentiment with the freedom of grace,—he proceeds to say—"I apprehend, therefore, that when the Apostle says, 'As concerning the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes,' he means, for the sake of that which God promised to their fathers. The promise to Abraham was, 'In thee,' or 'in thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' Gen. xii. 3. xxii. 18. This, the Apostle informs us, was the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, and in which the gospel was before preached to Abraham; and he explains this seed in whom the nations were to be blessed, and to whom the promises were made, to be Christ." Gal. iii. 8, 16, 17.*

This view of the passage is liable to the following objections:—

1. Mr. Maclean understands 'the election' as meaning the *persons elected*; and the pronoun *they* as having them for its antecedent,—“they, (i. e. the election) are beloved for the fathers' sakes.”—But the structure of the entire verse will hardly admit of this:—“As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.”—It seems evident, that the pronoun “THEY,” in the two clauses of the verse, has the same

* Review, p. 92, 95.

antecedent. It relates to *the race of the Jews*,—not the then existing generation, but *the race* generally, considered as the offspring¹ of the ancient fathers. The same mode of expression occurs in all the preceding context—where the Apostle, speaking of the *future restoration* of Israel, says—“And **THEY** also, if they “abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God “is able to graft **THEM** in again,” &c., verses 23—27. Although the pronoun *them* appears to refer to the branches which were then broken off, yet the real reference is, not to the generation then in being, but only to *the same people or race*, at a distant period, considered as retaining its identity in its continued connection with the same original root or stock.

It appears to me evident, that, in the verse under consideration, *things* and *persons* are respectively set in contrast:—“as concerning **THE GOSPEL**”—“as touching **THE ELECTION**:”—“enemies for **YOUR** sakes”—“beloved for **THE FATHERS’** sakes.”—“The election,” therefore, means, I think, not the *persons chosen*, but the *Divine choice*. The word is used in both senses in the preceding part of the same chapter; and this acceptance of it here accords with the verse which follows;—“for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance:” which in effect is the same as saying, the *Divine choice* is without repentance.

2. That the sense affixed by Mr. Maclean to the phrase, “*for the fathers’ sakes*,” is not the natural one, is evident from his own admission in the following words, which conclude the paragraph of which I have cited the beginning:—“So that whatever temporal blessings “and outward privileges were promised to, or conferred on, the nation of Israel, **FOR THE FATHERS’**

“SAKES, yet the spiritual blessings of redemption, which were peculiar to the elect among them, are promised and bestowed only FOR CHRIST’S SAKE.”—This is as much as to say, that if the phrase, “for the fathers’ sakes,” had been used in regard to temporal blessings, it might have been allowed to mean “for the fathers’ sakes;”—but that as the Apostle is here speaking of the restoration of Israel to the church of God, and of their salvation, it must signify, not what it plainly expresses, but “for Christ’s sake.” This is arbitrary. Is there any inconsistency in holding, that, whilst all the blessings of salvation are bestowed in free mercy for Christ’s sake, yet, in conferring them on any of the posterity of his servants, the God of grace may have a regard to the previous objects of his love, and, in blessing the offspring, gratify, as it were, an ancient affection to the fathers? And is not this in perfect harmony with the language, so frequent in scripture, which represents the love of God to the fathers as terminating upon the children:—“The Lord had a delight in thy fathers, to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day—circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.”*

3. The promise quoted by Mr. Maclean, namely, “In thee,” or “in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed,” affords no ground whatever for the inference of a special or primary regard to the election *among the Jews*. That promise relates alike to the Gentiles and to the natural offspring of Abraham: and any obligation on the part of God

* Deut. x. 15, 16,

to fulfil a promise relative to *all nations*, was not at all to the purpose of the Apostle's argument. The election among the Gentiles were as much beloved for the sake of this promise, as the election among the Jews. It left no room for a "*how much more*" on behalf of the latter. If there was any *primary respect* in it at all, it was rather to the world at large than to the offspring of Abraham: and so the Apostle interprets it when he says—"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would "justify the heathen through faith, preached before the "gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations "be blessed." Gal. iii. 8. But that a peculiarity of regard to the "seed of Abraham, God's friend," is intended to be expressed, is as clear as words can make it; and an explanation that takes away the ground of this, cannot be the true one.

4. It ought to be observed, that the promise, "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed," is, according to the Apostle, "*the gospel*" as preached to Abraham. If, therefore, "for the fathers' sakes" means for the sake of that promise, it means for the sake of *the gospel*. What, then, are we to make of the text? "as concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the gospel's sake!" How entirely does this destroy the antithesis, and subvert the argument of the passage!

5. It is very unfair in Mr. Maclean, to introduce the word MERELY into the argument, a word which is neither the Apostle's nor mine:—"If they were thus "beloved *merely* for the sake of the godliness of their "fathers; Ishmael and Esau with their posterities, and, "at any rate, the whole nation of Israel, must have "had an equal claim to this peculiarity of divine re-

“gard; for they all sprung from the same godly fathers.” Who has ever said they were beloved *merely* for the sake of their fathers? who ever thought so?—As to what is said of “Ishmael and Esau, with their posterities,” I have only to say, let the reader look at the text cited a little ago, where Moses says to the Jewish people, “God had a delight in thy fathers “to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even “you above all people.” Is there any connection intimated here, between the choice of the seed, and the delight in the fathers? If there be, (and who can question it?) the answer to the objection lies not with me—namely, why God did not choose Ishmael and Esau with their posterities, on account of the same delight. The fact that it was otherwise is all in our favour: for, seeing the connection between the delight and the choice, as between a cause and its effect, is so unequivocally intimated, it follows, that there is no inconsistency between *gracious sovereignty* in the choice of the seed, and a regard of love in it, at the same time, to the fathers.

Mr. Maclean further objects, that, “as the promises “made to Abraham had a primary respect to his natural offspring, it follows from this, that they can “have no such respect to the natural offspring of Gentile believers, for this plain reason, that they cannot “have *two* primary respects.”*—But the objection is more specious than solid. The spiritual seed amongst the posterity of Abraham, and the spiritual seed amongst the Gentiles, are not *two spiritual seeds*. They are one seed, of which Abraham is the spiritual father. The

* Review, p. 93, 94.

primary respect for which I contend, was not, if I may so speak, concentrated in Abraham personally. It descended with the possession of his faith; every follower of that faith sharing in it, and deriving from it his encouragement in making known God's "testimony and law" to his children, that they too might "set their hope in God." When a Gentile received the faith of Abraham, and united himself to the Israelitish church, the circumcision of his children along with him showed, that, amongst other privileges, he became a partaker in this primary respect of the promises to the natural offspring. At the fulness of time, the Gentiles, believing the gospel, and received into the church, became the people of God. The blessing of Abraham came upon them. They became partakers and heirs of the promises:—and the continuance among them of the primary respect to the natural offspring no more constitutes two primary respects, than their reception into the church produced two peoples of God, or two spiritual seeds of Abraham.

SECTION II.

IN the preceding section I have endeavoured to show, that the covenant made with Abraham was the gospel covenant, the covenant of grace, under which we live, and which is the basis of the New Testament church:—that the ordinance of circumcision was attached to that covenant, and, as the sign of its blessings and the seal of its promises, was, by divine command, administered to children:—that, although there is abundant evidence of a change in the rite or ordinance, there is none whatever of any such change in its administration, as excludes children from being any longer the legitimate subjects of its observance:—and that, therefore, whilst our baptist friends call upon us for the production of express precept, authorizing the baptism of children, we are better entitled to require the production of such precept from them, repealing and setting aside the ancient injunction and practice, which existed under the same covenant, and, not belonging to the old economy, the dispensation of Moses, did not necessarily cease when that economy “waxed old” and vanished away.”

The excellence of any process of reasoning consists

in its successfully eliciting, and establishing truth. The philosopher who contrives an experiment, or a course of experiments, by which a controverted point in science may be satisfactorily settled, should certainly be regarded with gratitude. If any brother philosopher should have formed to himself certain principles and rules, according to which all scientific inquiries and experiments ought to be conducted, and should not only refuse to be satisfied by the experiments, but even so much as to examine them, because the process has not been in perfect agreement with his pre-ordained regulations, he would justly be reprimanded as unreasonable, as a bigot to modes and forms, and an enemy to knowledge, unless it has been attained by a particular route. No man has any title to complain of any mode of discussion, or of the sources from which arguments are drawn, if he is conducted by them to true conclusions and right principles.—I refer, in these remarks, to the exception, so generally and so strongly taken by our baptist brethren, against all reasonings in support of a New Testament practice, drawn from the Old Testament scriptures. It has even been said, that “those who attempt to prove infant baptism from the Abrahamic covenant, follow the same course as those who try to prove the propriety of the alliance between the church and the world. Many subtle arguments, which may perplex, are also brought forward on this subject from the Old Testament; but if any one attends to the nature of the kingdom of Christ, and to the apostolic instructions and examples, the truth appears clear and manifest.”*—It does so : but why?—because the

* Mr. Haldane's *Reasons of a Change in Sentiment and Practice in the Subject of Baptism*, p. 95.

arguments drawn from the Old Testament, in support of the alliance between church and state, have been deduced from a perverse misapplication to the conduct of other nations, of the peculiarities of the Jewish people, which were such as no other nation can be authorized to apply to themselves, unless they can show, that, like Israel of old, they have been singled out by Jehovah for special purposes, that they have been taken into the same peculiar relation to himself, and have been endowed with the same peculiar privileges. There never has been a divinely authorized national church but one. If it could be shown, that we found our argument for infant baptism on any of the peculiarities of that constitution; that we build our reasonings upon the specialties of the old and temporary covenant; that we would bind the consciences of christians by what was purely and exclusively Mosaic;—there might be some justice in the above comparison. But it is not so. The argument drawn from the Abrahamic covenant, is founded on the very consideration, that it is *not* exclusively Mosaic; on the contrary, that it existed centuries before the Sinaitic constitution, and was entirely independent of it; that it is the covenant of grace; and that, in arguing from it, we do not argue from *one* covenant to *another*, but from the *same* covenant in different states of its progressive revelation.—The only question with regard to any argument ought to be, Is it *scriptural*?—not, From which of the two Testaments has it been drawn? If both be scripture, it may be as scriptural when drawn from the one as from the other: and if it be scriptural, it is valid; for “all scripture is given “by inspiration of God.” There is a glorious and beautiful harmony in Divine revelation. If my argu-

ment from Moses makes him inconsistent with Paul, I must be in the wrong; but if another's argument from Paul makes him inconsistent with Moses, he must be equally in the wrong. That system is the right one, which harmonizes the different discoveries of the Divine mind, and shows the consistency of scripture with itself.

It has been alleged, moreover, as a general reply to the strain of reasoning in the preceding section, that, in regard to *infant baptism*, *the New Testament is silent*;—and *this silence alone is sufficient to set it aside*. The passage usually quoted in support of this sentiment,—quoted by men of sense and discrimination, and reiterated by men of neither,—is Heb. vii. 14. “For it is evident, that our Lord sprang out of Judah; *of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood*.”—I have been surprised, I confess, at the citation of this text for such a purpose. The two cases are essentially different. In the first place, the express command of God confined the priesthood in Israel to a particular tribe,—the tribe of Levi. The intrusion of others was unhallowed presumption, and punished with death. The phrase, therefore, “*Moses spake nothing*,” evidently means more, in this connection, than *mere silence*;—namely, that the law which restricted the priesthood to the tribe of Levi, was a law *exclusive of all others*,—so that, by this limiting and excluding statute, *Judah* had nothing to do with the priesthood. When our brethren shall have made out, from scripture, as exclusive a law for believer baptism, as the law which confined the priesthood to the tribe of Levi, they will have done something to the purpose. Their argument will then bear some resemblance in validity to that of

the apostle. But until they shall have done this, their reference to such a passage will continue a mere begging of the question.—Secondly, We deny the truth of the affirmation, that the New Testament is silent on the subject. We think it contains intimations of the connection of children with their parents, in the promises of the covenant, and the blessings of the kingdom of heaven, and also of the apostolic practice in regard to their baptism, exactly such as the circumstances of the case might have led us to expect.

I must again repeat, that proofs of the fact of adult or believer baptism, are nothing to the purpose; because they are proofs of what nobody disputes. The question stands thus:—Our baptist brethren adduce passages on their side of the controversy, in which persons are said to have “*believed and been baptized*”—to have been “*baptized both men and women*”—to have “*gladly received the word, and been baptized,*” &c. But we, on our part, say, these passages prove what to us requires no proof. They prove *adults* to have been baptized on a profession of the faith—but they do not *disprove* the baptism of the *children* of proselytes. Yes, say the baptists, they *do* disprove it; for, as to the baptism of any besides the believing adults themselves, the scriptures are silent. They “*speak nothing*” concerning the baptism of infants; therefore infants ought not to be baptized. Now, this is what we deny. It is precisely here that we are at issue. We say, they are *not* silent. We affirm, in the terms of the second of our three propositions, that *there is abundant evidence of the fact, that, instead of any change, exclusive of children, having taken place under the New Testament dispensation, the children of converts to the faith of the gospel*

were actually baptized along with their parents, in the time of the Apostles and the apostolic churches.—To the establishment of this proposition I now proceed. I shall state and illustrate a series of observations, all bearing us forward towards our conclusion, and some of them, of themselves, sufficient to settle it.

I. It is very common, to speak of the Old and New Testament churches, as if they were *quite distinct* from each other; as if, when the latter was introduced, the former had been entirely removed, done away, annihilated, and succeeded by something totally new. But this is far from being the style in which the matter is represented, either in the Old Testament scriptures, or in the New. In both, the ancient church is spoken of, not as annihilated, and succeeded by another, but as visited, comforted, purified, raised up, and gloriously restored from decline and corruption. If in some passages the idea of complete *renovation* appears to be suggested, we need not be surprised that such language should be applied to a change in the state of the church so remarkable,—to a revival so eminently glorious. The prosperity of the church in the latter days is represented by the “creation of new heavens and a new earth, so that the former should not be remembered, “nor come into mind.”—If such language is employed to elevate our conceptions and anticipations of that blessed era, we might surely expect terms somewhat similar to be used, in reference to the time when “God “was to be manifested in the flesh,” “a light to lighten “the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.”

The fact is, that when the prophets of the Old Testament predict the calling of the Gentiles at the fulness of time, they represent them as brought in to the pre-

viously existing church, although in its renovated and remodelled state :—and when the prophets of the New Testament foretell the restoration of the Jews, it is under the idea of being brought in again to the same church from which, on account of their unbelief, they had been ejected. I might multiply passages in proof of these positions. I shall content myself with two or three as a specimen.

The first is Isaiah xlix. 20—22, where Zion, or the church, is represented as complaining of the loss of *her children*, in prospect of the casting off of so great a multitude of the ancient people of God; and she is comforted and cheered with the assurance of an abundant increase from another quarter :—“ The children
 “ which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other,
 “ shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait
 “ for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then
 “ shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me
 “ these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate,
 “ late, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who
 “ hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone;
 “ these, where had they been? Thus saith the Lord
 “ God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles,
 “ and set up my standard to the people: and they
 “ shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters
 “ shall be carried upon their shoulders.”

Of the next passage, Amos ix. 11, 12., we have an inspired interpretation, in perfect harmony with the principle we are endeavouring to establish :—“ In that
 “ day will I *raise up* the tabernacle of David that is
 “ fallen, and close *up* the breaches thereof; and I will
 “ raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days
 “ of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom,

“and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this.” How is this prediction explained in the New Testament? How was the tabernacle of David to be raised up? How was the remnant of Edom and of all the heathen to be possessed by the ancient church? The answer is, by the bringing in of the Gentiles into the church of Christ:—Acts xv. 14—17. “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.” The attentive reader of the Old Testament prophecies will be at no loss to add to these quotations many more.

The only other passage I shall at present adduce is a very decisive one, from the New Testament, Rom. xi. 23, 24. “And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree?” Were the Old and New Testament churches entirely different, having no substantial points in common, it is not easy to see with what propriety the Jews, in being brought into the latter, can be said to be grafted into *their own* olive-tree—grafted in again, that is into the same olive-

tree from which they had been cut off.—Mr. Maclean indeed argues, that by this tree cannot be meant the *national church of Israel*, because *into* that church the believing Gentiles *were not grafted*. But does not the reader at once perceive that, upon the same principle, it might be said, it cannot mean the *New Testament church*, because *from* that church the unbelieving Jews *were not cut off*? And if it was neither the Old Testament church, nor the New Testament church, what church was it? Is it not very clear, that the believing Gentiles were grafted into the same stock from which the unbelieving Jews were broken off? and if they were grafted into the same stock, they certainly became branches of the same tree—branches, occupying the place of those that had been cut away. The tree is not represented as *cut down*, or *rooted up*; but as having “*some of the branches broken off*,” verse 17. If *some* were *broken off*, the *rest* surely *remained*; and when the branches of the wild-olive were engrafted, the tree continued. It is not a new tree planted, but an old tree, mutilated by the cutting off of a number of its branches, and filled up with grafts upon the lopped boughs: “Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off that I might be grafted in: well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear.”—The branches that were *broken off* were the unbelieving Jews;—those that *remained* were the spiritual members of the ancient church, and such as received the testimony of Jesus previously to the time of judicial excision;—and those that were *added*, in the room of the cast-away, were the converted Gentiles. It is true, there was an overturning of the national form of the church. Its constitution was re-modelled.

And the Gentiles were introduced, though not into the *national church of Israel*, yet into the *church of the living God* in its remodelled state:—and I can imagine nothing clearer, than that when the unbelieving Jews are represented as, at a period yet future, to be “grafted in again to their own olive-tree,” the figure means their being *reintroduced* to the same church, though under a new form, from which their ancestors were ejected. I have nowhere represented their being “grafted in again” as signifying their being “*put into their former Jewish church state* ;” but only their being restored to the church of God in its New Testament form.—It should be recollected, that the church which had Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob for its original stock—(we might go even farther back, but this is the point of time to which the Apostle’s reasonings usually refer)—that this church existed for more than four centuries before its national constitution was formally organized at Sinai. The natural offspring of these patriarchs, along with proselytes from among the Gentiles, formed all along the visible church of God; at times indeed in a state of fearful corruption, but still containing in it his true spiritual people, until “the time of restoration.” Then “the wicked were to be shaken out of it.” Those “children of the stock of Abraham” who were not his children by faith, though, on account of their fleshly connection with him, denominated “the natural branches,” were to be cut off; and Gentiles, becoming by faith children of Abraham, were to be grafted in, in their room, and to “partake of the root and fatness of the olive-tree;”—that is, to share in the special and enlarged privileges of the church, of which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were the original stock;

which was rooted in the covenant made with these patriarchs; and which, though varying its form and external constitution and aspect, has been substantially the same from the beginning. I might venture to say, that the whole style of prophetic representation of that which was to come, proceeds upon the principle of the substantial identity of the church;—and with this the language of the New Testament writers agrees.—I have before referred to the terms in which the prophets describe the church as, at the fulness of time, to be visited, restored, and purified. It is ridiculous to speak of this as if it meant its entire annihilation, and the substitution of another in its room. Some of the passages are very remarkable. Let one suffice. Speaking of the coming of the Messiah, the “Messenger of the covenant,” the prophet Malachi says, chap. iii. 2, 3.—“But “who may abide the day of his coming? and who “shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: And he shall sit as “a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify “the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, “that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in “righteousness.” This purification of his church was effected, by casting out the wicked in wrath, and by bringing the remnant through the fire, in mercy: See the subsequent verses, and Zech. xiii. 8, 9.—When the prophet adds, “Then shall the offering of Judah “and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the “days of old and as in former years,”—there can be no doubt that he refers to the spiritual worship of the New Testament church. But this is not the worship of a church entirely new, but of the old renovated and purified;—and it is compared, in its acceptableness, to

that of the church in former times, in the purest and best periods of her ancient history.—When the Gentiles are brought in to the church of Christ, they are described as having been previously “*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,*” but as now “*no longer strangers and foreigners,* but fellow-citizens with the “*saints, and of the household of God.*” Eph. ii. 12, 19.

But it would be endless to dilate. Enough has been said in support of my first position.

II. My second is, that we ought to bear in mind, what was the previous state of things in regard to children, and their connection with their parents in the application of the sign and seal of the covenant.—What this was, I need not repeat. I merely remind the reader of it. The connection, and the symbolical recognition of it, existed not only amongst Jewish families themselves, but extended to the case of Gentiles professing the faith of Abraham,—proselytes to Judaism. A head of a family was received into the community of Israel, *with his household*. When I say, with his household, I mean his infant children, and *such of the adults as professed the same faith with himself*. I make this restriction, because the notion which some have entertained, that adults in a family were, upon the conversion of the head, *compelled, upon pain of death*, to go over with him to the new religion, is so revolting to every principle of justice and reason, involving the establishment, by divine authority, of a system of persecution unto death for conscience sake,—that I cannot assent to it; nor do I conceive that there is any thing in the record, that may not be fairly explained, without the admission of a supposition so monstrous. But on this I must

not here insist.* What I wish the reader now to bear in mind, is simply this—that the connection of children with their parents, of which I have been speaking, existed of old, and was interwoven with all the thoughts, and feelings, and practices of the ancient church. It had place in their own families. It had place in the reception of proselytes. It pervaded and characterized the entire style and language of their sacred books.

* When any interpretation of a divine law proceeds on a supposition, that is diametrically at variance with the grand moral principles of the Bible, and the divinely sanctioned rights of conscience, I feel myself warranted, in not merely suspecting, but concluding, that it involves some mistake. The author of “*Eugenio and Epenetus*,” previously to the publication of that work, submitted to me, as a friend, some parts of the manuscript, requesting my remarks. I offered a few strictures in reply. These are repeatedly referred to in the work, though, in conformity with my desire, without the mention of my name, which, as the remarks were but brief and hasty, I did not wish at the time to be introduced. I have now no objections to avow myself the writer of the following paragraph, at p. 85 of those “*Conversations*,” designed to illustrate, by a parallel case, what I conceive to be the true spirit of the injunction that “all the ‘males’ of Gentile proselytes should be circumcised, before these proselytes themselves could be admitted to eat the passover.—“Suppose the government of any country to enact a law, that all foreigners, desirous of settling in the country as subjects, should, in order to their enjoying the ‘privileges of subjects, have a particular mark affixed in their forehead or right hand. Apply this enactment to the case of the head of a family having, let us say, *twenty* adults. Suppose four of these are unwilling to receive the necessary mark: would it be at all a rational interpretation of the law, that therefore he could not leave these four, and settle in the country with the remaining sixteen, who were willing to accompany him on the prescribed condition? The obligation arising from such a law would never be interpreted as amounting to—‘You must have a mark affixed to the body of every adult, as well as infant now in your family. You cannot settle in the country, if even one of these refuses to submit to this mark, not even on the ground of that one being excluded and left behind.’ It would be understood as amounting only to this—‘No one who does not receive this mark must come with you;

The connection of this observation with our argument will appear immediately, when we have remarked,

III. In the third place,—The language of the prophets, in looking forward to New Testament times, appears to assume, or even to affirm, the continuance in those times of the same connection that existed of old.

“for none such can be admitted to the privileges of subjects.”—The “application of this to circumcision is obvious. When all the members of a man’s family are required to be circumcised, on the head of the family, bringing his house thus along with him, passing into the communion of Israel, all that is implied appears to be, that all who passed with him into this communion, and became partakers with him of its privileges, must have this mark put upon them.”

The parallelism of this illustrative case appears from the very reason assigned for the injunction—“*For no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.*” If the declared *object* of the law is *perfectly attained*, without the monstrous supposition adverted to in the text, of every adult member of a household being compelled, upon pain of death, to follow the faith of its head, are we not fairly warranted to conceive the supposition erroneous?—“In the supposed parallel case,” says Mr. Innes, in reply, “of a person enjoying, on certain conditions, the privileges of a particular community, there is one very important point omitted, viz., that it was an essential part of the law, that if any one of a man’s family did not receive the mark he was to be *cut off*, i. e. to be put to death. The case alleged supposes, that it was an optional thing in the members of the family to submit to the prescribed mark or not; and that if any of them did not, they might leave the family, while the head of it was not to blame. Now this is a case totally different from the institution of circumcision. According to it, a man was deeply criminal, if he had not all his males circumcised. Such as were not so, were not authorized to separate from him, but were commanded to be put to death.”—I need not say much in answer to this, because it is only a re-affirmation of his interpretation of the law. Granting that being “cut off from his people” means being put to death; as the design of the law was to prevent any uncircumcised person from partaking of the passover or being a member of the Israelitish community, which was the church of God, the punishment I understand to apply to such as should presume, without

Jeremiah, speaking of the blessedness of the house of Israel, when they shall turn to the Lord in the latter days, says, in the name of Jehovah:—"I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."*—I cannot readily imagine any consistent interpretation of this passage, if it does not contain a promise of spiritual blessing to the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now in a state of dispersion, and likewise to *their* children after them, in their generations; or, as the prophet Ezekiel expresses it (chap. xxxvii. 25.) "to their children, and to their children's children, for ever." And, as this language respecting the Jews is used in prospect of their union with the Gentiles in

circumcision, to intrude themselves into the congregation of the Lord. This is evident, from the nature of the case; from the original law, that "every uncircumcised manchild should be cut off from his people,"—which manifestly signifies every manchild *found in connection with the congregation of Israel*,—the very phrase "from his people" implying this; and from the fact of the judgments of God being denounced against Israel by the prophets, for having, amongst other evils, "brought strangers, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in his sanctuary, to pollute it."

* Jer. xxxii. 37—40.

the New Testament church, when they shall acknowledge Jesus to be the Christ; it follows, that the terms employed concerning them are descriptive of the state and privileges of *all* the subjects of the new covenant, Gentiles as well as Jews. The passage, then, as referring to gospel times, seems to contain an intimation, that the same connection should then continue between the people of God and their offspring, which had existed from the days of Abraham.

The prophet Isaiah, predicting the glory of the church in the latter days, gives the following, among other declarations, of the blessedness of God's people:—"They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: for they are *the seed of the blessed of the Lord*, and *their offspring with them*." Isa. lxxv. 23. They are "the seed of the blessed of the Lord," that is, as I apprehend, the spiritual seed of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were peculiarly the blessed of the Lord;—"and their offspring with them;" that is, connected with them, as in the days when the covenant was made with these blessed of the Lord, in the promise of that covenant, and partaking with them of his blessing. This appears to be assigned as the reason of their "not bringing forth for trouble,"—the blessing of the Lord resting on the offspring in connection with their parents.

In replying to any argument, candour always requires, that we bear in mind the precise point which it is intended to establish. The above passages are adduced, simply to show, that the prophets, in anticipating the spiritual times of the New Testament church, employ language such as indicates the future continuance of the connection between parents and children which

formerly subsisted. The proper way of answering them, therefore, is, to show that they do not, in any degree, warrant or countenance such an inference. I say, *in any degree*. It is not enough, to show that they are not, in themselves, and apart from all other proof, conclusive. It would be a very foolish way of disproving the strength of a chain, to take up any particular link, and show that it was not at the end, and had not an immediate connection with the final point of fixture. Each link, however remote, *has* a connection with that point, as real and as necessary, though not so immediate, as the last. Each in its own proper place, by its junction with that which precedes and that which follows it, contributes to the continuity and strength of the chain. And so does each argument, in a series of proofs, conduct to a conclusion. If each bears legitimately its own proportion of inference, this is all that should be expected from it. To reply to it, by showing that it does not bear *more*, that it is not in itself conclusive as to the ultimate point, is not candid.—Thus, in answer to the above passages, it has been said, “We want *direct proof*, that the ‘good’ promised in ‘them, to the people of God and ‘*their children after them,*’ includes *their baptism while infants.*” This is banter, not argument. The sole question should be, Do the passages give any countenance to the inference, that the connection between parents and children, which subsisted from the institution of the covenant with Abraham, and characterized the ancient dispensations, was to continue under the new? If the negative of this precise point is not made out, the passages are not fairly met, but evaded.—It has been further said, “We want positive proof that *their children* mean *their infant chil-*

“*dren.*” But this too is little better than evasion. There can be no question, that in the promise of the original covenant, “I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee in their generations,” *infant children* were included; for the token of the covenant was applied to them at eight days old:—this was the connection between parents and children which existed anciently, and which was familiar to the Israelites; and the question is, as before, whether the above, and other similar passages, do or do not contain any intimation that, in the predicted New Testament period of the church, the same thing was to continue.—I am satisfied they do, —the attempt to explain them away having confirmed the conviction.

IV. I go on now to remark, in the fourth place, that the language of the New Testament intimates the continuance of the same connection; and intimates it exactly in such a way as, from the previous state of things, might have naturally been expected.

It is of essential importance, in interpreting the New Testament, that we should keep in mind the state of things preceding it. The reason is obvious. It is surely natural to expect, that its language should be affected by these existing circumstances; and the import of the expressions used we shall be unable, in many instances, correctly to appreciate, unless we take into our view a reference, in the mind of the writers, to what already existed and was familiarly known, and the existence and familiar knowledge of which rendered greater enlargement, and minuteness, and precision, unnecessary. This is a principle so obvious, and its influence so natural and unavoidable, that, with the man who should question the admission of it as a legiti-

mate canon of interpretation, I should consider reasoning as thrown away. The strongest thing said against it, we shall have occasion to notice by and by.

I have before observed, how the burden of proof lies on the side of the opponents of infant baptism. They seek a precept in positive terms—Let the infant children of proselytes to the faith of the gospel be baptized with their parents. But we demand a precept in similar positive terms—Let the children of proselytes be no longer admitted, as formerly, to the sign and seal of the blessings of the covenant of God.—We call for the production of an express declaration, that such admission is inconsistent with the spirituality of the new dispensation. But no such thing is ever said: no hint of such a thing is ever given. So far from it, let us mark, in general terms, how the case stands.—After finding the connection in question pervading the Old Testament, in the manner we have stated;—the children of the professed people of God circumcised with their parents; and the children of Gentile proselytes to the faith of Abraham introduced with their children, by the same rite, to the privileges of the ancient church;—we then come forward to the history of the new dispensation. If this previous state of things were really inconsistent with its spiritual nature, it seems not unreasonable to expect, that the language on this point should be plain and decisive. But what is the fact? Instead of plain and decisive intimations of this inconsistency, and of the necessary discontinuance of the practice, we meet with language in perfect accordance with the previous state of things; precisely such as writers whose minds were habituated to it would naturally use, and such as

readers in similar circumstances could not understand in any other way than one.—“ They brought young
“ children to him, that he should touch them; and his
“ disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when
“ Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto
“ them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and
“ forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.
“ Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive
“ the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put
“ his hands upon them, and blessed them:”—“ Jesus
“ said unto him, This day is salvation come to this
“ house; forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham:”—
“ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, for the remission of sins; and
“ ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost:—for the
“ promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that
“ are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall
“ call:”—“ A certain woman, named Lydia, a seller
“ of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped
“ God, heard us:—whose heart the Lord opened, that
“ she attended to those things which were spoken of
“ Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us,” &c.—“ They said unto him,
“ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be
“ saved, and thy house: and they spake unto him the
“ word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house:
“ —and he was baptized, he and all his, straightway:”—
“ I baptized also the household of Stephanas:”—
“ The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the
“ believing husband;—else were your children un-

“clean; but now are they holy.”*—It is not on one or another of these texts, taken separately, that I am resting my argument under this particular. It is on the intimation which, when taken together, they so clearly afford, of the continuance of the same state of things, in regard to families, as formerly. I profess myself unable to account for the language, on any thing like easy and natural principles of interpretation, unless upon this hypothesis. The unnatural straining which is employed, to get rid of some of the passages, we shall see immediately.—But, before leaving this particular, I must take notice of a highly ingenious, and, at first view, very plausible and imposing light, in which the objection has been placed to the mode of reasoning in general from the previous state of things, and of the minds of the Jews in reference to it. “By the same kind of reasoning,” it is alleged, “it might, with equal plausibility, be proved, that the kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of this world. It might be argued, That, though the kingdom of ancient Israel was a worldly kingdom, including their carnal seed, it was the kingdom of God. That the prophecies relating to the kingdom of Messiah frequently represented it as a worldly monarchy, like the kingdom of Israel under the reigns of David and Solomon:—that the Jews in general interpreted these prophecies of a worldly kingdom; their minds were habituated to this idea, and it was an idea deeply rooted in their hearts: They must therefore have understood John the baptist, or Christ and his apostles, when preach-

* Mark x. 13—16. Luke xix. 9. Acts ii. 39. xvi. 14, 15. and 31, 33.
1 Cor. i. 16. 1 Cor. vii. 14.

“ing that kingdom, in a sense consistent with their
“previous views, as intimating a *continuance* of the
“same worldly kingdom as formerly, but now to be
“restored to Israel, and raised to a higher pitch of
“worldly power and prosperity than ever.”*

Now, ingenious and plausible as this mode of putting the question may seem, it is more than fallacious. I am obliged to the writer for it, because it serves to set my argument in a still clearer light, and to give it additional force and conclusiveness. It is admitted, that the minds of the Jews were habituated to the expectation of a worldly kingdom, and that the idea was deeply rooted in their hearts. Let the passages, then, be pointed out, in which John the baptist, or Christ and his apostles, acted or spoke in a manner that harmonized with this expectation, and was calculated to countenance and to cherish, instead of unsettling and doing it away. The cases will then be parallel. But it is far otherwise. Instead of parallelism, there is contrast. The whole conduct and discourse of our Lord are framed, as if for the very purpose of opposing their worldly and unscriptural conceptions. Every thing about him was fitted to put them down, and to thwart, and mortify, and wither the hopes arising out of them. His whole preaching, when he proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, was pointedly directed against the prevailing ideas of its nature. The very first sentence of his sermon on the mount was enough to dissipate them for ever—“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:” and the whole description of character which follows has the

* Maclean's Rev. pp. 119, 120.

same tendency. It is all spiritual, opposed to every worldly principle, to every carnal and earthly expectation.—Of the same description is his first address to Nicodemus, intimating the necessity of a spiritual birth, in all the subjects of his kingdom—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—And how flatly and explicitly does he contradict what he knew to be the views and hopes of the Pharisees, when they asked him "when the kingdom of God should come"—"The kingdom of God," said he, "cometh not with outward show: neither shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there, for behold the kingdom of God is within you."—All this is in harmony too with the "good confession" which he subsequently "witnessed before Pontius Pilate," "My kingdom is not of this world."—In fact, the very existence of these false preconceptions makes him studious, as it were, to avoid whatever might encourage them, and to embrace every opportunity of exposing and warning against them.—This is what might have been expected. And I have only to request the candid reader, to consider the marked difference between the two cases; and to put the question to his own mind, whether, if the continuance of the pre-existing connection between children and parents had been inconsistent with the spirituality of his kingdom, he, who showed himself so jealous of that spirituality, and set himself so decidedly against the carnal conceptions of his deluded countrymen, would not have acted, in regard to it, upon the same principle, and have avoided whatever was fitted to countenance and confirm erroneous preconceptions?

V. Having taken this general view of the passages,

let me now, in the fifth place, request the reader's attention to two or three of them separately.

Acts. ii. 38, 39. "Then Peter said, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

These words were addressed by a Jew to fellow Jews. How would such an audience understand them? When they heard of a promise *to them and to their children*, could their minds fail, on such an occasion, to go back to the promise of the covenant made with their fathers, and declared to be to them and to their seed after them? And, in that case, there was but one sense in which the hearers of Peter could understand the designation "your children." Yet it is on the ground of the promise made to them and to their children, that the apostle founds his assurance of "the gift of the Holy Ghost:" and this gift another apostle (Paul) denominates "the blessing of Abraham,"—or declares it at least to be included in that blessing. Gal. iii. 14.—Recollect, then, that the minds of Peter's auditors were habituated to the idea of the connection of their children with themselves in the promise of the covenant. The idea was deeply and familiarly settled in their minds and hearts. Is it unreasonable, then, to say, that they must have understood Peter's words,—the words of Divine promise to themselves and their children—addressed to them by an inspired prophet,—in a sense consistent with that which they were accustomed to affix to similar modes of expression, when used of old to their fathers,—and consistent with all their pre-

vious habits of thought? And if they did so understand them, they must have conceived of them as assuming, and intimating, the continuance of the same connection.—Are we then to suppose, that this “holy man of God, speaking as he “was moved by the Holy Ghost,” would, without explanation or restriction, at the very “beginning of the gospel,” in his first address to his countrymen, when a right impression was of so much consequence—employ expressions, that were fitted to convey to their minds a false and worldly view of the nature of Messiah’s kingdom?

Mark x. 13—16. “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when “Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto “them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, “and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of “God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not “receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall “not enter therein. And he took them up in his “arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”

“The kingdom of heaven” is the New Testament church,—the spiritual kingdom of Christ, begun on earth, and perfected in heaven,—the gospel dispensation, including both its state in this world, and its state in the world to come. This comprehensive view of the designation readily accounts for its being sometimes applied to the church below, and at other times to heaven itself. It is the same kingdom, in the two great stages of its progress.—Of this kingdom, young children (*βρεφοί*, infants) are here most explicitly declared to be subjects,—partakers of its privileges and blessings.—If (as some allege) the phrase “*of such*” means of *persons possessing the dispositions of children*, it means this, beyond all ques-

tion, *inclusively of the children themselves*. If not, the reason for receiving them would have been as applicable to *lambs*, or *doves*, as to children:—besides, that the words which follow ascertain their being included,—“Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as “*a little child*,” (i. e. surely as a little child *receives it*,) “he shall in no case enter therein.”—The Sovereign of this kingdom, then, distinctly recognises little children amongst his subjects; and he is “much displeased” with those who would have prevented their being brought to him for his blessing. Recollect, then, reader, the previous state of things; and let me ask you, is this at all like the language of *exclusion*? Is it not, on the contrary, language which teaches us, that such little children are capable of possessing the blessings of his kingdom, and that a large proportion of those who shall glorify and enjoy him in heaven consists of such?—Am I then to believe, that whilst Jesus makes this interesting declaration, pronouncing them objects of his tender love, subjects of his spiritual kingdom, and partakers of its blessings, he, at the same time, cuts off all such from any external sign of connection with the kingdom he was establishing?—that he declares them partakers of the blessings of the promise, and yet forbids the outward token of such participation to be any longer administered to them?—that he receives them, with the melting eye of benignity and kindness, and acknowledges their intimate connection with him, and yet excludes them from every external indication of such connection, leaving them no mark or token of the love he so emphatically expresses for them?—I must have proof of this, more explicit and satisfactory than any I have yet seen, before I can be-

lieve it. The words of Christ appear to me very plainly to warrant the inference, or even to involve a declaration, that, as the great promise of the covenant made with the fathers was now receiving its accomplishment, it was still to include, according to its original constitution, the people of God and their seed. The persons by whom these children were brought to Jesus, professed, in the very act of bringing them, their faith in him, and the value they set on his blessing.

If it shall be objected, that salvation is not confined to the seed of believers,—I gladly admit the fact. I delight in the conviction of the salvation of all that die in infancy, though it would be foreign to my purpose to enlarge here on the grounds of this conviction. Let one observation suffice. I see God actually taking of the offspring of ungodly men, and calling them by his grace, *in their adult years*; and, resting on this matter of fact, I can see nothing to hinder his taking also, as the objects of his sovereign mercy, such of their offspring as *die in infancy*. I am not, however, to forget, that God's sovereign dealing in the case of others, is not to be considered as interfering with his special promises to his people; and that the administration of ordinances must run in the line of the Divine promise and prescription. *We* have no title, whatever God's sovereignty may do, to go beyond or out of the course of these. The appropriation of the promise and seal of the covenant to the line of descent from Abraham by Isaac, was not such as to preclude the gracious admission of proselytes from among the Gentiles.*

* I know not in what terms to express my reprobation of the following contrast between the baptist and paedobaptist systems, in regard to the state and prospects of dying infants. It is from the *Strictures* of Mr.

Luke xix. 9. "Jesus said unto him, 'This day is salvation come *to this house*, for-so-much as he also is "a son of Abraham :"—Acts xvi. 15. "When she was baptized, *and her household* :"—Acts xvi. 31, 33. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be "saved, *and thy house* :"—"He was baptized, *he and all his*, straightway :"—1 Cor. i. 16. "I baptized also "the household of Stephanas."

These passages relating to *families*, I take of course together. The general argument from them, arising from the continuance of a phraseology corresponding to the previous state of things, I have considered under the preceding particular. As to *that* view of the argu-

Birt on Mr. H. F. Burder's Sermon, and evinces a degree of unfairness towards many at least of his pædobaptist brethren, which I should not have expected from such a quarter. Surely Mr. B. knew, or ought to have known, that many of them held the same sentiments with himself as to the salvation of all who died in infancy, and were sensible of no inconsistency between these sentiments and their principles and practice as pædobaptists. He should, therefore, have been ashamed to write in terms so unqualified as the following, however strongly tempted to hold up to execration the narrow-minded exclusiveness of the system of his opponents :—
 "The baptists, with grateful confidence, esteem all children who die in
 "infancy to be equally and certainly saved, without any distinction;
 "whilst pædobaptism, with a *partial*, gloomy, and awful aspect, makes a
 "privileged order among dying babes—placing a comparatively small
 "number in a state of regeneration, and a very few others in the cove-
 "nant of grace; leaving the vast and incalculable majority destitute of
 "those blessings, which are essentially necessary to their future and eternal
 "felicity. Who that impartially considers this subject, can avoid being
 "thankful, that the *Bible* does not lead him to so awful a conclusion, and
 "that he is not by divine authority connected with a practice, the implica-
 "tions of which are so truly appalling?"—I unite, with my whole heart,
 in my worthy friend's thankfulness, that "the Bible does not lead me to
 "so awful a conclusion." But it is not the man who has *impartially*,
 it is the man who has *very partially indeed*, considered the subject, that
 can represent pædobaptism as involving any such appalling implications.

ment, I feel no anxiety about the question, whether there were infant children in those families or not. As the passages, however, have been the occasion of no small controversy, a few additional observations are indispensable.

In the first place, then, there is one point of fact undeniably clear, namely, that the apostles baptized *households*, or *families*. As to this there can be no question.—It should be noticed, too, that a man's *house* (*οικος*) most properly means his children, his offspring, his descendants,—and is generally used to denote these even exclusively. I refer the reader to the following instances, which he may consult. Ruth iv. 12. 1 Kings xiv. 10—14. xvi. 3. xxi. 22. 1 Tim. iii. 4. &c.

Secondly: To an unprejudiced reader of the New Testament, it must, I think, be equally clear, that the baptism of families is mentioned in a way that indicates its being no *extraordinary* occurrence,—but a *thing of course*. This is remarkably the case as to Lydia. “The Lord opened her heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul. And *when she was baptized and her family*, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there.” I cannot but consider any person unreasonable, who will not admit, that the mode of expression here is one which would naturally be used respecting a thing that was customary. And it is worthy of notice, moreover, that the baptism of her family is immediately connected in the record with *her own* reception of the truth; and that upon *her own* faithfulness to the Lord she founds her plea for their coming under her roof.—Similar remarks might be made as to the case of the Philip-

pian jailor, who “was baptized, *he and all his* straight-
“way.”

Thirdly :—Having thus the unquestionable fact of the *baptism of families*,—a fact according with the ancient practice of the circumcision of families,—and supported by the use of a word that properly denotes a man’s children or offspring;—we are warranted to assume, that such was the usual practice, unless our baptist brethren can show, that the cases of Lydia, the jailor, and Stephanas, were in the circumstances of them *extraordinary*, and therefore not fair specimens of what was customary. Here is the turning point on this part of the argument. If they cannot make out this,—or if they cannot make it out without unnatural straining and inadmissible suppositions, our ground is firm.

Let us then, *in the fourth place*, examine a little the principles on which they endeavour to set aside the inference from the examples in question.—“We really,” they allege, “cannot help its appearing unnatural, to “suppose that there were no little children in those families : we have to do only with the *fact* ; and in each of “the cases, we have clear evidence that there were “none.” What then is this evidence?

First, it has been said, there were no children in the family of Lydia ; for when Paul and Silas were released from their imprisonment, “they entered into the “house of Lydia ; and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.” We are here informed, it is alleged, that the family of Lydia were “brethren,” who were capable of being “comforted” by Paul and Silas at their departure.—Now, let the reader observe the wonderfully slender ground on which this argument rests. It is simply this, “They

“saw these brethren in the house of Lydia,—therefore
“they were Lydia’s family—and Lydia’s family only !”
Surely, compared with this, “the spider’s most at-
“tenuated thread, is rope, is cable.” The reader, to be
sure, must be quite aware, how preposterously absurd it
is to suppose, that any persons should ever come into a
man’s house, except the members of his own family ! and
especially when a common friend is there, about to take
a last farewell,—whom none of course could have any
wish to see ! Seriously, is it inconceivable that the con-
verts at Philippi should have met in the house of Ly-
dia ? Is it very improbable, that they should have been
there at a season so interesting,—waiting the result,
and engaged in prayer for the suffering preachers of
the word, like those who met for this exercise, in the
house of John Mark, on behalf of Peter ?—or that they
should have convened there, for the purpose of taking
farewell of Paul and Silas ?—Let the reader further
observe, what an improbable and heartless supposition
is involved in this argument ;—a supposition, which no
one surely would willingly admit, unless necessitated
by an express declaration :—namely, that Lydia and
her family were the only converts, except the jailor and
his, made during Paul’s stay at Philippi. But this is
not only contrary to all probability ; it is opposed to ob-
vious fact. The history is very brief ; and the particular
incidents selected for detail are only a few out of many,
distinguished by the peculiarity of their circumstances or
consequences. Sometimes nothing is recorded at all,
but the fact of the preachers having visited the coun-
tries, although we afterwards learn, incidentally, that
they had met with much success. Thus in Acts xviii.
23., we are informed, that Paul “went over the coun-

“tries of Galatia and Phrygia in order, *strengthening all the disciples:*” yet all that is said of these countries before, is, “When they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia.” Acts xvi. 6.—Are we then to suppose, that Paul and his associates remained at Philippi “*many days,*” (verses 12, 18.) at a time, too, when God was so remarkably blessing the labours of his servants, “always,” as the apostle himself expresses it, “causing them to triumph in Christ, and making manifest the savour of his knowledge by them in every place;” and that the entire product of their preaching for that time in the chief city of Macedonia, was *one family*?—for the jailor’s was at the close of their stay, and arose from very peculiar circumstances. I refrain from saying what I think, of the argument that requires such a supposition to support it.—But still further. From the manner in which the apostle writes to the church at Philippi, it appears evidently to have been, from the first, a numerous and flourishing one. Let the reader consult the following passages of that epistle—chap. i. 4—7. i. 30. ii. 12. iv. 3. iv. 15, 16.—or, if he please, peruse the whole; and draw the inference for himself, whether the apostle had seen no more fruit of his labours, when there, than the members of two families!

Equally futile are the proofs adduced, that there were no infant children in the households of the jailor, and of Stephanas:—namely, that respecting the former it is said, Paul “spoke the word of the Lord to all that were in his house,”—which supposes them all capable of understanding and receiving what he spoke: and respecting the latter, that they “addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,” 1 Cor. xvi. 15., which

shows them to have been all capable of feeling and practising christian benevolence.—The simple answer to this is, that such *general expressions* are perfectly common, both in conversation and in writing. When we ascribe to a *family* any thing of which infants are universally understood to be incapable, we never think of making a formal exception of them. I should reckon the man foolish, who should conclude from my saying “I spoke to the whole family,—to all in the house,”—or, “They are a very benevolent family; they lay themselves out for doing good,”—that I was certainly speaking of a family in which there were *no infant children*. When Joshua says, “As for me and *my house*, we will *serve the Lord*,” does any one ever think of inferring, that his family could not contain any infants, because infants were incapable of serving the Lord? Yet the inference would be as legitimate in this case, as in either of the others: and it may not be amiss for our baptist brethren, to make it the subject of a little self-examination, by what principle it is that they are led to such a conclusion in the one case, when they never think of it in the other? what is the precise difference in the state of their minds, when they read the 15th verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of Joshua, and when they read the 34th verse of the sixteenth chapter of the Acts, or the 16th verse of the sixteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians?—

Let us only consider for a moment, into what ridiculous absurdities we should be led, by the general adoption of such a principle of criticism.—The children of Israel were commanded, in preparing the pass-over, to “take a lamb for a *house*, according to the *number of the souls*.” Are we to infer from this, that

they numbered the mouths of sucking infants?—or that there were no such infants at that time in the families of Israel?—They were enjoined to eat it, “with their loins girt, and their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand.” Children could not do this; therefore we conclude again that there were none;—and the conclusion is irresistibly confirmed, by the testimony of the Psalmist respecting the passage through the Red Sea,—for they went through the flood, he says, “*on foot*,” which infants certainly were incapable of doing.—When the paralytic Eneas was cured by Peter, it is said “all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord;”—from which, amongst other inferences, it will follow, that these places presented the singular anomaly, of a population without infants!—Paul writes to the Thessalonians, that “if any would not work, neither should he eat:”—were the babes of Thessalonica, then, to be left to starve, because they were incapable of earning, or of being willing to earn, their daily bread?—Let no baptist say indignantly, “This is ridiculous,—it is making a joke of the matter.” Let him recollect, that the materials of the joke are furnished by his own friends. Let the *argument* (if it must have a name to which it has no title) be withdrawn, and there will be no room left for the *joke*. I am only ashamed indeed of being obliged to treat it so seriously. It is not worth the ammunition.

VI. I add, as a *sixth* general observation, the extreme improbability, that a change, which must have been felt so important by those whose minds had been all along habituated to the connection of their children with themselves in the covenant of promise, should

have taken place, without the slightest recorded symptom of opposition or demurring.

We know the strength of attachment to ancient institutions, felt and manifested by the Jewish converts to the faith of the gospel,—their extreme reluctance to part even with those observances, which belonged exclusively to that system of shadows, of which the body was Christ. They were still “zealous for the law;” and they showed their zeal by their indignation at Paul, for having, as they had been informed, taught their countrymen, that they should not “*circumcise their children*, neither walk after the customs.” Is it likely, then, nay is it at all conceivable, on the supposition of the new system entirely excluding children from its appropriate rites, that not a hint should appear of any one having been startled by the change,—that not a symptom should have discovered itself of any disposition to object or complain?—Nay more—that none of the bitter adversaries of the christian scheme should ever have cavilled at this, or founded upon it any part of their disputatious opposition!—That to Jewish eyes it must have appeared an innovation of no trifling magnitude, will not be questioned by any one, who duly considers, how strongly the connection, supposed to be disannulled, was sanctioned in their minds, by the sacred provisions of God’s covenant with their venerated fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;—how firmly it was settled in their practice, not only by the regular circumcision of their own offspring, but also by the admission of Gentiles *by families* into the communion of Israel; and how intimately it was incorporated with all their most favourite and cherished conceptions.—Considering, therefore, the attachment of the believing

Jews to ancient practices on the one hand, and the eagerness of their unbelieving countrymen, on the other, to avail themselves of every possible ground of objection,—the circumstance of no opposition having been made to such a change, and no appeal rested upon it against the christian doctrine, and the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, when it might have been done with so much plausibility and effect,—is in my mind a proof, of no inconsiderable weight, that no such change had actually been introduced.

VII. Another remarkable circumstance, akin to the preceding, is,—that when the judaizing teachers insisted on the Gentile converts submitting to circumcision, —although there can be no doubt that this was done, in every case, *in connection with their children*;—yet, when the doctrine and practice of these perverters of the gospel came to be discussed in the assembly of the apostles and elders and brethren at Jerusalem, no notice whatsoever is taken of the inconsistency with the spirituality of the new dispensation, of administering *any* sign to *children*, on the admission of their parents into the christian commonwealth,—or of treating them as if they continued to have any connection at all with their parents, in reference to the blessings of the covenant, or of the church of God.—Now surely, if such connection really *was* inconsistent with the spirituality of the gospel and the New Testament church, it must have been an error of no trifling moment; and it is reasonable to conclude, that, upon an occasion which brought the subject so immediately and formally under notice, some disapproval should have been intimated and recorded, of the error itself, and the practice founded upon it: and the absence of all such intimation is a

collateral evidence, that there was no such inconsistency, and that children were to be held, and treated, as sustaining the same covenant relation to their parents as formerly.—I hope I am clearly understood. When these judaizing teachers insisted on the circumcision of Gentile proselytes to the faith and profession of the gospel, they doubtless administered the rite according to the instituted and universal practice,—the children being circumcised with the parent. But if this covenant relation of parent and child had, under the gospel, been abolished, as being inconsistent with its spiritual nature, it is hardly conceivable, that, on such an occasion, on so natural and fair an opportunity, no notice whatever should be taken of such abolition and of such inconsistency. This, I say, forms an additional corroborative indication of the continuance, in this respect, of the former state of things.

VIII. Let it be further considered, that we have no recorded instance of the baptism of any person, grown to manhood, that had been born of Jewish converts, or of Gentile proselytes to the faith of Christ;—nor have we, in any of the apostolic epistles to the churches, the remotest allusion, in the form of direction, or of warning, to the reception of such children by baptism into the christian church, upon their professing the faith in which they had been brought up.

To every mind that duly considers the case, this must appear a very remarkable circumstance. The class of individuals alluded to must have been a very numerous one indeed, and one too, exceedingly important and interesting. But although, in the epistles to the churches, instructions, various and minute, are given, on points connected with their order, and purity,

and increase, on some of which inquiries had been made by them at the apostles, we have nothing, in any shape whatever, on this subject.

“I have heard it alleged,” says Mr. Walker,* “that
 “this is drawing an inference from the *silence* of scrip-
 “ture, which that silence does not warrant. But the
 “objection is made by those who do not, or will not,
 “understand the argument. I do not argue from the
 “*mere* silence of the scriptures, that the thing about
 “which they are silent was, or was not. But this I
 “say, that so far as it is probable, from the nature of
 “any thing, that if it were so or so the scriptures would
 “not be silent about it, so far is their silence about it
 “a probable argument that it was not so. Now, it
 “appears to me, that baptism, upon the baptist prin-
 “ciples, is such a thing; and from the silence of scrip-
 “ture on the subject, I cannot but see a confirmed pro-
 “bability that these principles are false.—And it is
 “vain to say, that what the scriptures relate of the
 “baptism of *adult* believers is sufficient, and shows that
 “there is not that silence of which I speak. For every
 “instance of adult baptism recorded in the Bible is an
 “instance—not of the baptism of one brought up from
 “childhood in the profession of christianity—but of
 “one who had never before professed christianity. So
 “that there *is* that absolute silence on the subject
 “which I have asserted—so far as the baptist prin-
 “ciples are concerned in it.”

Our baptist brethren present us, in support of their system, with instances of the baptism of *adults*. They would do something more to their purpose, if they

* Thoughts on Baptism, &c.

could produce one or two examples of the baptism of *such adults* as those mentioned. These would be in point. But nothing of the kind is to be found;—nothing in the form either of fact, or allusion, or advice, or precept. And the simplest explanation, and one in every respect sufficient and satisfactory, of the total absence of every thing of the sort, is the supposition of what so many other proofs concur to establish,—that the children of the converts who composed the churches had been baptized with their parents, on these parents entering as disciples into the fellowship of the New Testament church.

IX. This supposition, let it be further noticed, is in coincidence with the fact, of children being addressed in the apostolic epistles to the churches of Christ. Thus in Ephes. vi. 1. “Children, obey your parents in “the Lord, for this is right.” Col. iii. 20. “Children, “obey your parents in all things; for this is well- “pleasing unto the Lord.”

That such preceptive intimations of the Lord’s will are not to be understood as addressed merely to those adult members of families, who were at the same time members of churches, but as including children from their earliest capability of instruction and admonition, should be admitted by every candid mind that considers their connection with the injunctions, which immediately follow, to parents:—“And ye fathers, provoke not your children “to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and “admonition of the Lord.”—“Fathers, provoke not “your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” The duties of parents, in the bringing up of their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, commence with the first dawn of reason, and must

keep pace with the gradual opening of the mind :—and it is a part of this duty, to point out to their children as early as they are capable of understanding, the above commands of the Lord *as addressed to them*; to show them how the Lord, the Head of the church, the good Shepherd, who “gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom,” the kind and condescending Saviour, who said “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,”—how HE in these words tells them their duty, and shows them the motives,—motives of grateful love to himself,—by which they should be influenced in the fulfilling of it. Do our baptist brethren wait till their children are members of churches, before they venture to put their finger on the passages we have quoted, and say, “This is addressed to you?” If they do not, they act inconsistently with their principles; for if the words were not originally addressed to the young children of the parents in the churches, neither are they now :—and yet if they do, they discharge their parental trust, as it appears to me, in a very defective and unscriptural manner. Of many of them whom I know, and esteem, and love, I am persuaded better things. Yet every baptist who, in the christian tuition of his family, opens his Bible, and points out to his little interesting charge, the words “Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right,”—and tenderly inculcates the duty by the motives that are involved in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord,”—tacitly admits by his practice that young children were addressed by the apostles,—and that, not merely as members of families, but, since the epistles were directed to churches, as in some way con-

nected, by virtue of their relation to their parents, with the little christian communities to which the apostles wrote. And this is in perfect harmony with the baptism of families, and with all the preceding particulars ; —and in harmony too with all the directions given as to the treatment of children in the Old Testament Scriptures, when their covenant relation to their parents, and their connection with the community of the people of God, are not questioned.

X. The circumstances of the early history of the church, after the apostolic age, are unaccountable on antipædobaptist principles.

The advocates of these principles allege, that the first writer by whom infant-baptism is expressly mentioned, is Tertullian, who lived in the beginning of the third century, a hundred years and more after the apostolic age:—and he, says Mr. Cox, “in fact condemn it !” Emphasis is thus laid on the peculiar *opinion* of this father. But the question before us is not one of *opinion*, but of *fact*. Tertullian was remarkable for singular and extravagant opinions. “He was endowed,” says Mosheim, “with a great genius, but “seemed deficient in point of judgment. His piety was “warm and vigorous, but, at the same time, melancholy and austere. His learning was extensive and “profound ; and yet his credulity and superstition were “such as might have been expected from the darkest “ignorance. And with respect to his reasonings, they “had more of that subtlety that dazzles the imagination, than of that solidity that brings light and conviction to the mind.”—On the particular subject before us, he not only advised the delay of baptism in the case of *infants*, but also of *unmarried* persons. Will

our baptist brethren admit the inference as to the latter, which they draw so complacently as to the former? The truth is, that, as to *both*, the *legitimate* inference is the very contrary. The very *advice to delay*, or, if you will, the *condemnation* of baptism in infancy (though these two are far from being the same, and the former alone properly belongs to Tertullian) is a conclusive evidence of the *previous existence of the practice*. This is the point. The *opinion* is nothing to the purpose. It has no authority. If our baptist friends think it has, let them do the good old father justice, and follow it fully.—His *condemning* the practice of baptizing infants, so far from being in their favour, militates against them. It not only proves its previous existence; it proves more. It proves that it was no innovation. When a man condemns a practice, he is naturally desirous to support his peculiar views by the strongest arguments. Could Tertullian, therefore, have shown, that the practice was of recent origin; that it had been introduced in his own day, or even at any time subsequent to the lives of the apostles; we have every reason to believe, he would have availed himself of a ground so obvious, and so conclusive. It proves still further, that the baptism of infants was the *general practice of the church* in Tertullian's time. His opinion is his own. It is that of a dissentient from the universal body of professing christians. He never pretends to say, that any part of the church had held or acted upon it. Of his *opinion* and *advice*, then, we may say, *Valeant quantum valere possunt*. But the total absence of any attempt to support and recommend them, by appeal to the practice of the church in apostolic times, or of any part of the church at any intervening

period, certainly goes far to prove the *matter of fact*, with which alone we have to do,—that infant-baptism was the original and universal practice.

“Origen, who was contemporary with Tertullian, expressly declares infant-baptism to have been the constant usage of the church from the apostles. He says, ‘The baptism of the church is given for the forgiveness of sins: but why are infants, *by the usage of the church*, baptized, if there is nothing in them that needs forgiveness?’

“Further, he says, ‘*Infants are baptized* for the remission of sins; for none is free from pollution, though his life be but the length of one day upon the earth. And it is for that reason, because by baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, that *infants are baptized*.’

“Again, he observes, ‘*The church had from the apostles an order to give baptism to infants*; for they, to whom the Divine mysteries were committed, knew that there was in all persons the natural pollution of sin, which must be done away by water and the Spirit.’

“Now, as Origen, in these passages, argues from infant-baptism to prove original sin, we may conclude it was an uncontroverted usage of the church: for otherwise, he could not with propriety have used it as an argument to establish another point.”*

This remark is judicious and strong. The reader will also bear in mind, that it is solely with *matter of fact* that we are at present concerned, and not with the particular opinions of fathers, whether right or wrong.

* Sermons on the Mode and Subjects of Baptism, &c. By Joseph Lathrop, D. D. New England.

“Cyprian, who wrote about 150 years after the apostles, gives a fuller testimony to this fact” (of the baptism of infants being the uncontroverted usage of the church). “In this time, a question was started by one Fidus, not whether infants might be baptized, but whether baptism ought not to be given them on the eighth day, according to the law of circumcision? This question was proposed to a council of sixty-six bishops, convened at Carthage, who unanimously resolved, that the baptism of infants ought not to be deferred to the eighth day, but might be given them at any time before. And a large letter to this purpose, containing the reasons of the resolve, was written and signed by Cyprian, in the name of the council. Now ————— if infant-baptism had been a usage lately introduced, some or all of these ministers must have known it. And if so, it was very strange that not one of them intimated any scruple about it. Whether infants should be baptized, seems not to have been at all a question; but only whether their baptism needed to be deferred till the eighth day, which, without hesitancy, was determined in the negative.*

“Austin, about 300 years after the apostles, had a controversy with Pelagius about original sin; and to prove it, he frequently urges infant baptism, demanding why infants are baptized for the remission of sins, if they have none? Pelagius, though greatly puzzled with the argument, yet never pretends that infant baptism was an unscriptural innovation, or a partial usage in the church; which, had it been true, a man of his very extensive acquaintance with the

* Ibid.

“ world must have known : and had he known it, he
 “ doubtless would have said it, when he found himself
 “ embarrassed with the argument.* But, far from inti-
 “ mating any such thing, when some charged upon
 “ him the denial of infant baptism, as a consequence of
 “ his opinion, he disavows the consequence, and com-
 “ plains that he had been *slanderosly represented as*
 “ *denying baptism to infants*. He asks, ‘ Who can be
 “ so impious, as to hinder infants from being baptized,
 “ and born again in Christ.’ And, citing those words,
 “ ‘ Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he
 “ cannot enter into the kingdom of God,’ he says, who
 “ can be so impious as to refuse to an infant, of what-
 “ ever age, the common redemption of mankind? And
 “ many other expressions he uses, which plainly sup-
 “ pose, that infant baptism had been practised univer-
 “ sally, and time out of mind.”†

This last citation shows, whence the application ori-
 ginated of the term *regeneration* to baptism; namely,

* Mr. Milner justly deduces the same inference from the instance of
 Cœlestius, the supporter of the Pelagian heresy in Africa, in the beginning
 of the fifth century.—“ He was accused of denying original sin; and
 “ when he was pressed with the custom of the church in baptizing infants,
 “ as a proof of her belief in all ages that infants needed redemption, he
 “ declared that they had no need of remission, and yet ought to be bap-
 “ tized, that they might be sanctified in Christ.”—“ On being asked,
 “ whether he had not asserted, that infants are born in a state in which
 “ Adam was before transgression, all that could be obtained from him
 “ was, that infants needed baptism, and ought to be baptized.”—The first
 of two inferences drawn, in a note, from this case, is: “ That the right of
 “ baptizing infants was allowed on all sides to have been of apostolical
 “ and primitive authority. It is impossible that men so shrewd and
 “ learned as Cœlestius and his master would not have objected to the no-
 “ velty of infant baptism, had it been a novelty.”—Chap. III. Cent. V.

† Ibid.

from our Lord's language, "Except a man be *born of water*, and of the Spirit." The phrase, "born of water," very naturally accounts for the early application of the terms significant of the spiritual change, to the external symbol. The phraseology indeed gives no countenance to the unscriptural and irrational figment of *baptismal regeneration*, any more than the declaration, "This is my body," gives to transubstantiation or the real presence. It may show us, however, whence the foolish and pernicious fancy arose; and at all events, it explains the early use of similar phraseology, by the christian writers, in regard to baptism.—The phraseology of Pelagius in the preceding quotation, appears to have come down current from an earlier age.—"Irenæus, who wrote about sixty-seven years after the apostles, and was born, it is said, before the death of St. John, and was acquainted with Polycarp, who was John's disciple, says concerning Christ, He came to save all persons by himself, who by him are *regenerated* unto God, infants, little ones, youths and elderly persons."—That by being "regenerated unto God" he means being baptized, candour, I think, ought to admit, when the expression is compared with that of Pelagius, and when the explanation of Irenæus himself is considered—"When Christ gave his disciples the command of *regenerating unto God*, he said, Go, teach all nations, *baptizing* them," &c. Now, our baptist brethren themselves being judges, *infants* are incapable of being "regenerated unto God" by means of human instruction. So far as the agency of man is concerned, they could only be partakers of the external sign.

"Justin Martyr, who wrote about forty years after

“ the apostolic age, says, ‘ We have not received the
 “ carnal, but the spiritual circumcision by baptism—
 “ And it is enjoined to all persons to receive it in the
 “ same way.’ Here he plainly considers baptism as
 “ succeeding in the place of circumcision, and conse-
 “ quently as being designed for infants, as *that* was:
 “ which opinion he could not easily have fallen into,
 “ if the apostles had universally, both in doctrine and
 “ practice, rejected infants. In one of his apologies
 “ for the christians, he says, ‘ Several persons among
 “ us, of sixty and seventy years old, who were *made*
 “ *disciples to Christ from their childhood*, do continue
 “ uncorrupt.’ *Made disciples*. He uses the same word
 “ which is used in the commission, *Disciple all nations*,
 “ *baptizing them*. If they were *made disciples*, they
 “ were doubtless baptized.”*

Does the reader marvel that infant baptism should not be spoken of more frequently, and in more direct and explicit terms during the first century after the apostles? Let him only suppose the uncontroverted universality of the practice from the beginning, and his wonder will cease. That which goes on as the understood and established usage, it is quite natural to expect should be but seldom spoken of, and, when it is, only in the way of indirect and incidental allusion. *Circumcision* is never alluded to for more than a century and a half after its institution, when an occurrence in the history, the violation of Jacob’s daughter, the proposal of marriage with her by the prince of Shechem, and the artful revenge of the patriarch’s sons, leads to the incidental mention of it;—and from that time, it

* Ibid.

is never noticed again, for nearly two centuries and a half, till the circumcision of the younger son of Moses by his mother Zipporah.—The case is similar, during the first century after the apostles, with regard to infant baptism. It is occasionally alluded to, in terms, on which, we are not disposed to deny, an adversary, now that it has come to be controverted, may plausibly put another construction; and the first that speaks of it in plain language, and by its proper name, is the first that questions and objects to it. And on what grounds does he object? Not that the practice was without apostolic authority;—not that it was a recent and unscriptural innovation;—not even that it was only partially observed in the church:—no: he never hints any such things as these. His objections proceed, chiefly, on a superstitious notion he had come to attach to the rite, on which he founds a proposal for the delay of its administration;—a proposal, including not merely infants, but unmarried persons, and having precisely the same authority as to both,—the authority, that is, of Tertullian's fanciful singularity.

“Curcellæus remarks,” says Mr. Cox, “The baptism of infants in the first two centuries after Christ, was altogether unknown?” But of what amount is the *gratis dictum* of Curcellæus, or of any man? With regard to the *first* of these two centuries, which we may denominate the apostolic century, we claim the privilege, whatever Curcellæus may remark, of forming our own judgment from the apostolic records themselves, till other and higher authority be produced. And as to the *second*; even supposing we were wrong in our interpretation of Justin Martyr and Irenæus,—what are we to make of Tertullian and Origen in the begin-

ning of the third? According to the remark of Curcellæus, the practice of infant baptism was “*altogether unknown*” till after the beginning of this century; which amounts to the same thing as saying, that these fathers witnessed its introduction, and were aware of its being a practice totally new and unheard of before! How then comes Tertullian to assume its previous existence, without the remotest hint of its novelty or its partial extent? And how comes Origen to speak of it as the “usage of the church,” and received as “an order from the apostles?”—And how comes it, I ask further, that no baptist has ever been able to discover, and to point out, the time when infant baptism was introduced—to trace the practice to any origin on this side of the apostolic age? Had nothing of the kind existed originally, then there was, from the first, throughout all the churches, a standing practical testimony against it. Yet not the slightest vestige is to be found, by which its introduction into the christian church, and its early and universal reception, can be traced. The time of Tertullian was the time, not when it began to be *practised*, but only to be *questioned*; and questioned, not as *unauthorised* and *unlawful*, but, on certain grounds of the author’s own, as *generally* (for he admits of exceptions) *inexpedient*.—It has been said, indeed, that about the end of the second century, an opinion began to prevail, of the necessity of baptism to salvation; that parents naturally took the alarm for the salvation of their children; and that hence arose infant baptism. Now, it is very convenient to find a fact in history, on which we can found a plausible hypothesis. But we must still distinguish between the hypothesis and the fact. The latter is history, the former is fancy only,

and conjecture. And, if we are to deal in theory and hypothesis at all, to me it appears an incomparably more natural and reasonable conjecture, in the present case, that the *opinion arose from the practice*, than that the *practice arose from the opinion*. If about the end of the second century, “parents took the alarm for the “salvation of their children,” and had them, on this account baptized, then the whole christian church must have previously, for nearly two hundred years, believed in the salvation of their children *without* baptism. Now, when we have *hypothesis* on both sides, that is most entitled to credit which is simplest and most natural. The question therefore is, (since no historian has recorded this alarm of parents, *as the origin of infant baptism*) whether is it most likely, that the universal practice of the baptism of infants should have led the minds of men to connect their baptism with their salvation, and thus to fall into the opinion of its necessity, and the danger of omitting it; or whether, in opposition to the previous conviction of two centuries, the opinion came first to be entertained, and the baptism of infants to be founded upon it, and to have become almost instantaneously universal?—I must honestly say, that I can entertain but a low estimate of that man’s perspicacity, or candour, that can hesitate between these two suppositions.

A similar remark may be made, respecting certain other practices, which were early introduced into the church, and which our antipædobaptist brethren are very fond of quoting, as on the same footing with infant baptism:—the early practice, for example, of *administering the Lord’s Supper to infants*. The previous existence of the admission of infants to *one* christian

ordinance, affords a very natural origin for the practice of introducing them to another. The one might very readily be grafted upon the other, whereas it is very far from being so easily accounted for, that both should have taken place, so early, and the former so universally, without the least opposition or noise.

XI. I have only one other particular to add to this series. It is the remarkable fact, of the entire absence, so far as my recollection serves me, of any thing resembling the baptism of *households* or *families*, in the accounts of the propagation of the gospel by our baptist brethren. That the apostles baptized families, no believer of the scripture history can doubt; and we have seen, that the manner in which such baptisms are recorded, or referred to, indicates that it was no extraordinary thing. Now it surely *is* an extraordinary thing, that in the journals and periodical accounts of baptist missions in heathen countries, we should never meet with any thing of the kind. I question, whether, in the thirty years of the history of the baptist mission in India, there is to be found a single instance of the baptism of a household. When do we find a baptist missionary saying, “When she was baptized and her family”—or, “I baptized the family of Krishnoo,” or any other convert? We have the baptism of individuals; but nothing corresponding to the apostolic baptism of families. This fact is a strong corroborative proof, that there is some difference between their practice and that of the apostles. If the practice of both were the same, there might surely be expected *some little* correspondence in the facts connected with it.

Let me, in concluding this section, entreat the reader to take all these things together, calmly, dispassion-

ately, candidly.—I have endeavoured to show, that the Old and New Testament churches, though different in their constitutional forms, and in the degree of their spirituality, are most clearly and distinctly represented, both by prophets under the former, and apostles under the latter dispensation, as *substantially the same*:—that the connection of children with their parents, in the promises of the covenant, and in the application of its sign and seal, existed under the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, was interwoven with all the thoughts and feelings and practices of the Old Testament church, and pervaded and characterized the entire style and language of their sacred books:—that the prophets, in their inspired predictions relative to New Testament times, employ language, such as directly affirms, or evidently implies and assumes, the continuance of the same connection under the approaching reign of the Messiah:—that, on coming forward to the New Testament records themselves, so far from finding any direct repeal, or even any indirect intimation of change in the previous state of things, we find language in perfect accordance with it, exactly such as, on the supposition of its continuance, we might, a priori, have expected the writers to use;—instead of an express declaration that children were no longer to be admitted to the seal of the covenant, and acknowledged as visible subjects of the reign of Christ, we have Christ himself saying, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God;” we have the apostles, in the very outset and establishment of that kingdom, declaring to Jews, without explanation or comment, “The promise is unto you and unto your children;” and we have the un-

questioned fact of the baptism of *families*, recorded in terms such as indicate its having been, not an extraordinary, but a customary thing, on the professed faith of the head:—that it is exceedingly improbable, that a change of such magnitude and importance as the entire exclusion of children from the place they were accustomed to hold, should have taken place without the slightest recorded symptom of opposition or demurring amongst the Jewish converts, tenacious as they showed themselves of the established usages, or of objection and cavil on the part of those who lay at the catch for whatever they could lay hold of against the new system:—that, so far from this, when the Judaizing teachers insisted on the necessity of the Gentile converts submitting to circumcision, which must of course have been administered to their children as well as to themselves, no notice whatever is taken by the apostles and elders assembled at Jerusalem, of the inconsistency with the spiritual nature of the new dispensation of administering to children, on the admission of their parents to the christian church, any sign of covenant connection with them,—although an inconsistency so great as, in the opinion of our baptist brethren, to amount to a subversion of the spirituality of Messiah's kingdom:—that we have no recorded instance of the baptism of any adult that had been born of baptized proselytes, Jewish or Gentile, to the faith of Christ—although this class of persons must, on the antipædobaptist hypothesis, have been very numerous indeed:—that in the apostolic epistles to the churches, children are expressly addressed, not merely adults, but such as were yet to be “brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;” and, although the spiritual

training of them is especially devolved upon their parents, yet their being so addressed shows that they were considered by the writers as having connection with the christian community :—that the circumstances of the early history of the church, after the time of the apostles, do not admit of a satisfactory explanation on baptist principles,—whilst they are in perfect harmony with the supposition of pædobaptism having been the original practice,—this most simply accounting for other facts, rather than being accounted for by them :—and that the entire absence, in the history of the propagation of the gospel by antipædobaptists, of any thing resembling the baptism of *families* which we find in apostolic times, should lead our brethren more than to suspect a difference between their views and practice, and those of the first preachers of the kingdom of Christ.—I say, let the reader take all these things together ; let him connect them with the argument of the preceding section ; and let him form his own conclusion. Nothing could be easier, than to blow trumpets, and to make a flourish, and to shout and vaunt with the triumphant confidence of victory. But it is not victory that should be our object, but solely the discovery of truth and duty.—I prefer no claims to originality, in almost a single statement or argument I have advanced. If I have succeeded in bringing old arguments into a well connected and luminous form, it is all that I have aimed at. Truth does not suffer by time ; nor is a good old argument at all the worse for its age. I can only say for myself, coolly and deliberately, and with perfect sincerity, that the more I have considered this case, I have ever felt my ground the firmer. Whether I may have conveyed

the same impression to the minds of my readers, I cannot tell. It is certainly my prayer to God that I may, because I believe the conclusion, which I have been endeavouring to establish, has the sanction and authority of his word.

SECTION III.

It has often been asked by antipædobaptists, What are the *uses* of infant-baptism? What *good ends* are answered by it? And their own reply to the question may be given in the words of Mr. Birt :* “ It is, on “ every ground hitherto taken for its support, a *cause* “ that in this world produces no *effect*—a *means* con- “ nected with no *end*—a *cloud* that affords no *rain*— “ a *tree* that yields no *fruit*.”—This representation, I hope to show, has a great deal more in it of boldness, than of truth.

It ought first to be observed, however, that with regard to all such questions as the one so often put and so confidently answered, there is obviously a *previous* question, namely that which we have been considering in the preceding sections, *Is it, or is it not, a divine institution?* If it be once shown to possess the authority of the supreme Lawgiver, it will not be disputed, that our first and immediate duty is compliance. What he appoints, it is ours to observe. Questions of a similar kind might have been asked respecting *circumcision*. Multitudes of those to whom that rite

* Strictures, page 10.

was administered died in infancy : of what use was it to them? Multitudes who lived till manhood, never obtained the blessings of the temporal inheritance : what was the benefit of it to them?—But it is not with questions of this nature that we have, in the first instance, to do. Our *first* inquiry should be, *What is God's will?* not *Why is it his will?*

Still, however, we freely admit, it is reasonable to expect, that there should be some uses apparent of whatever the God of infinite wisdom enjoins :—and on the present occasion, we feel no difficulty in meeting the inquiry. Of baptism, as administered to infants, we are at no loss to point out uses, which we conceive to be of no trivial magnitude. We shall endeavour to show these, by considering it in the two following lights :—

1. AS A MEMORIAL OF FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS :—2. AS A REMEMBRANCER OF IMPORTANT DUTIES, AND AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO THEIR PERFORMANCE.

I. In considering infant-baptism in the former of these views, as a *memorial of fundamental truths*, it becomes necessary to take some notice, in the first place, of the general signification of the rite itself. It appears, then, to me very evident, that the emblematic significance of baptism is to be found in the *purifying nature of the element employed in it*,—in the *cleansing virtue of water*. Almost every instance in which the ordinance is spoken of, or alluded to, with any intimation of its meaning, might be adduced in proof of this. The following passages are but a specimen of many : Acts xxii. 16. “ And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, “ and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the “ Lord.” Eph. v. 25, 26. “ Christ loved the church, “ and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and

“*cleanse it, by the washing of water, through the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.*” In this passage, spiritual purification is no doubt intended; but it contains such an allusion to the ordinance of baptism with water, as leads us to conclude, that this spiritual purification is what it is designed principally to represent.—A similar allusion there seems to be in Tit. iii. 5. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the *washing of regeneration*, and renewing of the “Holy Ghost.”

From these and other passages it appears, that baptism, by the emblem of the cleansing virtue of water, denotes the removal of sin, in its guilt, and in its pollution. Of such allusions, indeed, the scriptures are full. And surely, that view which is most frequently exhibited to our attention, and which, both on the subject of justification and of sanctification, imparts, if I may so speak, a peculiar figurative complexion to the current language of scripture, I am warranted to consider as at least the principal, if not even the exclusive import of the institution.

But according to the views of our baptist brethren, *washing*, or *cleansing*, so far from being the exclusive, is not even the principal, but only a secondary meaning of the rite.—Whilst the general tenor of the language of scripture, as well as a number of particular passages, seems to place its symbolical meaning in the *nature of the element employed*, it is by them placed principally, and by some of them indeed, as would appear from their manner of expressing themselves,

almost solely, in *the mode in which that element is used.*

The passages referred to by them, in support of this notion, are the two following: Rom. vi. 3, 4. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Col. ii. 12. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead."—In these passages, our brethren conceive, there is an obvious reference to the mode of baptism by immersion. The apostle represents this ordinance, to use the language of Mr. Maclean, in his Commission, page 137, as "exhibiting the *death, burial, and resurrection* of Christ, together with the christian's *communion* with, and *conformity* to him therein." The baptized person's communion with Christ in his death and burial, is represented by his being *laid under the water*; and his communion with him in his resurrection, by his being *raised out of it*.

Two things may just be noticed here, before proceeding to the explanation of the passages. The first is, that it is obviously incorrect, to speak of the ordinance as "exhibiting the *death* of Christ," as well as his burial and resurrection: for, whatever resemblance fancy may imagine to the two latter, there is surely no representation of the former. The *death* can only be considered as *implied* in the *burial*.—The second is, (what has been largely shown by others,*) that even to

* See particularly Mr. Ewing's late Essay.

the burial and resurrection of Christ, the immersion of a body under water, and its emersion from it, bear but a very indistinct and remote resemblance. The mind may easily indeed habituate itself to the idea of likeness, between being let down under *earth* and raised out of it, and being let down under *water* and raised out of it. But where is the likeness, between the latter of these and the carrying of a body, by a lateral door, into a cavern hewn out of a rock, and that body reviving, and coming forth by the same door?—which were the real circumstances of the burial and resurrection of the Saviour. I confess, this resemblance, on which so much stress is laid by our baptist brethren, has always appeared to me but a far-fetched fancy. I shall say nothing stronger, lest I should possibly be in the wrong in so considering it. Of one thing, however, I must express my firm conviction, namely, that any allusion at all to the mode of baptism, is in no respect necessary to the right and easy understanding of the passages in question. And if this can be shown, it will follow of course, that they form but a flimsy foundation for the superstructure, of sentiment and practice, that has been reared upon them. Let it not be said, that other pædobaptists have thought differently, have admitted an allusion, and endeavoured to explain it in other ways. I cannot help that. I state my own views, and wish them to be tried, not by comparison with those of others, but by the test of the Bible. It is a puny and pitiful way of carrying on a controversy, to prowl about amongst different writers on the same side of a question, for the purpose of detecting, and setting forth in contrasted columns, every little discrepancy between them; with the view, covert or avowed, of drawing the

reader to the conclusion, that they cannot be right who so differ from one another. Our Baptist friends are rather too fond of this attempt to divide us against ourselves. Yet, were it altogether an honourable description of warfare, it is one in which we might venture on competition, without despairing of success.

With regard to the passages in question,—the spiritual meaning of them is well explained by the eminent baptist writer referred to a little ago,—Mr. Maclean, to be—“That, by a gracious constitution, Christ sustained the persons of all his elect, in his dying and rising again; that they were so comprehended in, and accounted one with him, as to have died in his death, been buried in his burial, and raised again in his resurrection.*” This I take to be the true principle of interpretation for the whole context of the passage in Rom. vi. But that this blessed truth, (with which, as the same writer justly observes, the scriptures abound,) is “signified to believers in their baptism, wherein the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are re-acted, in a figure, upon their own persons,”—the language employed does not seem, either necessarily or naturally, to imply.

To be “*baptized into Christ*” is to be baptized into the faith of him as the Messiah;—into the faith of his divine mission, character, and work. To be “*baptized into his death*” is to be baptized into the faith of his death, in the view which the gospel gives of it, as the death of a surety or substitute, making atonement for the sins of those for whom he died.—Now, by being thus “baptized into his death,” says the apostle, we

* Commission, page 140.

are "*buried with him*." The simple meaning of this expression evidently is, that by being baptized into the faith of his death, as the death of our surety and substitute, we become *partakers with him in it*. When the apostle, pursuing his beautiful illustration of the spiritual connection of believers with Christ, and the practical obligations thence arising, says in the eighth verse, "Now if we be *dead with Christ*, we believe "that we shall also live with him," he uses a phrase of equivalent import with the one before us. To be *dead with Christ*, and to be *buried with Christ*, are the same thing. The latter of the two phrases appears to be used in the fourth verse, chiefly for the sake of *completing the apostle's figure*. As it was necessary, in order to Christ's rising, that he should be *laid in the grave*; so, *in the figure*, it is necessary that we should be viewed as *buried with him*, in order to our *rising with him* to newness of life:—

"Ours the cross, the grave, the skies."

The simple meaning is this:—Since, in our being baptized into Jesus Christ, we were baptized *into his death*,—into the faith of his death as the death of a surety; we may be considered as, by faith, partaking with him in his death,—as *buried with him*; and that, with the special end of our rising with him, in a spiritual resemblance to his resurrection, and "walking in newness of life." Now it is quite obvious, that the *argument* of the apostle has not the remotest connection with the *mode of baptism*. There is not the most distant occasion for the supposition of any such allusion, in order to render the passage intelligible; nor does the allusion, when supposed, impart to it any addition of force or propriety. The meaning does not, in the least degree, de-

pend on the manner of performing the ceremony: it turns entirely on its being baptism *into Christ's death*. Provided it was this, it makes not the smallest difference to the apostle's statement, or argument, or conclusion, whether we suppose it to have been by immersion, by pouring, or by sprinkling.

The same observations apply, with at least equal, if not greater force, to the parallel passage—Col. ii. 12. Believers are there said to be “*risen*, as well as *buried*, “with Christ in baptism.”—They were not baptized into the faith of Christ's *death* alone, as the death of their surety; they were baptized also into the faith of his *resurrection*, as the resurrection of their surety. And as, by the former, they became, in virtue of their connection with him as a surety, partakers with him in his death; so, by the latter, they became, in the same way, partakers with him also in his resurrection. Being baptized into the faith of both, they had, by faith, fellowship or union with him in both. *How* is it, accordingly, that they are said to be “risen with him?” It is “*through the faith of the operation of God who raised him from the dead;*” that is, through the faith of his resurrection, effected by the operation, or mighty power, of God.—Their being “*risen with him in baptism*” does not, therefore, refer to any emblematic representation of a resurrection in the mode of the ordinance; but to their being one with him in his resurrection, through faith in him as the surety of sinners. And in this view they might, with perfect propriety, be said to be risen with him in baptism, whatever was the mode of its administration, provided only it was baptism *into the faith of his resurrection*.

It has, indeed, been alleged, that, in whatever sense

believers are said to be buried and risen with Christ, they could not be represented as so buried and risen *in baptism*, unless there were, in that ordinance, some *representation* of that burial and resurrection. I observe in reply : 1st. Although the expression in Col. ii. 12., is “buried with him *in baptism*” (Εν τῷ βαπτισματι;) yet in Rom. vi. 4., it is different—“buried with him *by baptism* into his death,” (Δια τοῦ βαπτισματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ;) which does not at all imply any such similitude in the ordinance, but directs the attention to *that into which they were baptized*; which, indeed, as I have noticed, is the point on which the whole reasoning turns.—2dly. Although it was, strictly speaking, *in believing*, that these converts became partakers with Christ in his death and resurrection; yet it is not unusual to speak of things as taking place *in baptism* which properly took place *by faith*, because baptism was the first public declaration of the faith of the converts, and of their belonging to the body of Christ. It is on the same principle, that they are spoken of as *in baptism* “washing away their sins,” and “putting on “Christ.”—3dly. In Rom. vi., the language of the whole passage is figurative. The same principle of interpretation, according to which the expression “*buried with Christ*” is explained as referring to the representation of interment by the immersion of the body under water, should lead us also to understand the phrase which immediately follows, “*planted together in the likeness of his death*” as referring to an emblematic representation of *planting*—which accordingly some have stretched their fancy to make out; or the phrase “*crucified with him*,” to some similar exhibition of crucifixion.

Being myself thoroughly convinced, that the significance and appropriateness of the rite arise from the cleansing nature of the element employed, and not from the mode of its application, I am disposed to consider the mode as of comparatively inferior importance. It is in the application of water, as the emblem of the purifying influence of the Spirit of truth, that the ordinance properly consists. A baptist brother may smile at me when I say, that on this ground I have no hesitation in admitting immersion to be valid baptism: and if it be a brotherly smile, I have no objection to return it. But if it be the smile of implied derision, which, if turned into words, would say—"A great concession truly! *admit* immersion to be valid baptism! why, immersion alone *is* baptism:—it is the only scriptural mode;—it is the only meaning of the original word;—it is the only representation of the death, and burial, and resurrection of Christ:—"I *could* return it on quite sufficient grounds, if derision were a brotherly feeling; but I would not *wish* to do it, because christian charity forbids me.

Although it is somewhat foreign to my main object, to pursue the discussion of the *mode* to any great length, yet I cannot pass it over without a few remarks. Others have successfully shown, by a detail of learned criticism, the consistency of the practice of pædobaptists with the usages of classical Greek writers. My present remarks shall be for the unlearned; being designed to show, that there is no occasion to go beyond the plain intimations of the Bible itself, for a satisfactory settlement of the point in dispute.

Even were it to be admitted, that *immersion* is the original or primary import of the word *baptism*—(which

is only the Greek word Anglicised)—yet every one at all versant in languages is aware, that it is not by tracing back a word to its earliest etymology, that its actual meaning is to be ascertained, in particular applications of it, at subsequent periods, in the history of the tongue to which it belongs. Even in our own language, we should run ourselves into innumerable mistakes and absurdities, by the adoption of such a test of the import of terms. The sole inquiry ought to be,—not, what is the strict, original, etymological sense of the word; but what is the sense in which it is used by the scripture writers? And it has long appeared to me, that the reading, and comparing with each other, of such texts as the following, should be enough to satisfy any candid man, that *sprinkling* and *pouring* are far from being without the countenance of these writers in their use of the term; and to lead the deriders of *infant-sprinkling*, (as even the least of our opponents have learned, from their superiors, sneeringly to designate our practice) to consider, on what and on whom their contempt must ultimately fall.

Mark vii. 4. Do our brethren *really believe*, that the *couches* on which the Jews reclined at their meals,—(which are meant by the word rendered improperly in this verse *tables*) were *immersed*, or plunged entirely under water? Is this likely in itself; especially where water was seldom so abundant as to be lavishly expended? And is it not much more reasonable to suppose, that in adding to the *extent* of the law of purification, the legal *mode* of purification should still be retained; and that the cleansing was similar to that prescribed, Num. xix. 18. “A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and

“upon all the vessels?”—At any rate, whatever be supposed as to the “pots, and cups, and brazen vessels,” it surely requires the prejudice of system, to fancy the immersion of the beds or couches.

In Heb. ix. 10. the apostle says of the ancient dispensation, that it “stood only in meats and drinks and *diverse washings*, and carnal ordinances.”—The word rendered *washings* is βαπτισματα (baptisms;) under which are certainly to be included all the various modes of ceremonial purification, or cleansing, that were enjoined under the law. The principal and most frequent of these was *sprinkling*. The cases in which the bathing of the body was prescribed are no doubt also intended; but it is enough for my purpose, if the expression is admitted to comprehend *other* modes of purifying.

1 Cor. x. 2. “They were all *baptized* into Moses in “the cloud and in the sea.”—Are our brethren not sensible of the straining that is necessary to make out immersion baptism here?—of the absolute ridiculousness of the conceit (I *cannot* view it in any other light) that the Israelites were baptized, by having the cloud over them, and the waters of the sea on either side of them? I cannot help the mind that has brought itself to fancy this quite simple and natural. A dry baptism! without the contact at all of the baptismal element, in any way! Would our brethren consider a man duly baptized, by his being placed between two cisterns of water, with a third over his head?

When the baptism of the Holy Spirit, signified by baptism with water, is spoken of, it is almost invariably associated with the idea of *pouring out*, or *effusion*:—and it is surely not unreasonable to conclude, that

there should be a correspondence between the emblematic rite and that which it represents; nor is the charge of inconsiderate presumption destitute of ground, against those who indulge themselves in ridicule and mockery of this correspondence.—As a specimen of the language of the scriptures, let the following passages suffice. Isa. xlv. 3. “I will *pour water* on him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground: I will *pour my Spirit* upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:”—Joel ii. 28, 29. quoted as fulfilled, Acts ii. 17, 18. “It shall come to pass afterward, that I will *pour out my Spirit* upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the hand-maidens in those days will I *pour out my Spirit*.” Acts ii. 34. “Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath *shed forth* (ἐξέχευεν, *poured out*) this, which ye now see and hear:”—Titus iii. 5, 6. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the *washing* of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he *shed* (ἐξέχευεν, *poured out*) on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

That this *pouring out of the Spirit* was the same as the *baptism of the Spirit*, we have an authority which my reader, I hope, will deem satisfactory—the express and pointed testimony of an inspired apostle. In giving his account of the effect of his mission to the household of Cornelius, Peter says, “And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost *fell on them*, as on us at the

“beginning. Then remembered I the word of the
 “Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with
 “water, but ye shall be *baptized with the Holy Ghost.*”
 Acts xi. 15, 16. That the Spirit *falling upon* these
 converts, is equivalent to his being *poured out* upon them,
 appears, from comparing this account of Peter with the
 narrative itself of the event: “As Peter began to speak,
 “the Holy Ghost *fell on* all them who heard the word.
 “And they of the circumcision were astonished, as
 “many as came with Peter, because that on the Gen-
 “tiles also was *poured out* the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
 —Look, then, reader, at Peter’s words. The Holy
 Spirit was *poured out*, and Peter called to mind the
 promise, which of course he considered as being then
 fulfilled—“Ye shall be *baptized with the Holy Spirit.*”
 According to Peter, then, *baptism* was effected by *pour-
 ing out*. Till better authority be produced, I desire to
 bow to this. The argument, I am aware, is very sim-
 ple, and may be contemned as being an unlearned one;
 —but my very object is to show, that learning is not
 necessary to determine the question, in what sense a
 writer uses a particular word, when that writer himself
 favours us with his own explanation. This is done
 here, in terms as explicit as it is possible to devise.
 And when Peter himself tells me that he *did* consider
effusion as *baptism*, it is not the learning of all the ety-
 mologists in Europe that will persuade me, against his
 own word, that it was impossible he should.

I have said, it is surely not unreasonable to suppose,
 that baptism with water, which represents baptism with
 the Spirit, should bear an analogy to it in this particu-
 lar. The language, accordingly, of the subsequent
 part of the same narrative, most naturally leads to the

conclusion, (so naturally, indeed, that I might almost say it directly expresses it,) that such was the fact,—that the converts, on whom the Spirit had fallen, were not conducted to a river, or elsewhere, where they might be conveniently immersed, but that water was brought, and that they were baptized immediately, upon the spot. Peter said, “*Who can forbid water*, that these “should not be baptized?” an expression which the ear itself of every candid reader at once interprets to his mind, as intimating the apostle’s desire that water *should be brought*. All assenting, he commanded them to be “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” It was immediately done; and they “prayed him to “tarry with them certain days.”

I only further remark, that the same authority, namely, that of scripture itself, warrants me so explicitly, to consider *sprinkling*, or *pouring*, as sufficiently expressive of *washing* or *cleansing* from pollution, that I have no deference to pay to any affirmations of the contrary. Let the following examples be attended to:—Ezek. xxxvi. 25. “Then will I *sprinkle* clean water “upon you, and *ye shall be clean*; from all your filthi- “ness and from all your idols will I *cleanse you*.” *Sprinkling* is here represented as having the effect of *cleansing*.—Psal. li. 7. “Purge me *with hyssop*, and I “*shall be clean*; wash me, and I shall be whiter than “snow.” The hyssop was used for *sprinkling* either water or blood, or both, upon the person to be ceremonially purified; so that here too sprinkling is held sufficient for cleansing.—So is it also in Heb. ix. 13, 14. “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes “of an heifer, *sprinkling* the unclean, sanctifieth to the “*purifying* (καθαροτητα) of the flesh; how much more

“ shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal “ Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God, *purge*” (*καθαίρει*, *purify* or *cleanse*) “ your conscience from dead “ works, to serve the living God?” The blood of Christ is, with the same allusion to its cleansing virtue, called the *blood of sprinkling*.—Isa. lii. 15. “ So shall “ he *sprinkle* many nations :” that is, “ with his aton- “ ing blood, and by the pouring out of his Spirit as “ purifying water ; of which,” (adds Mr. Scott, and it belongs to our baptist brethren to show how unreason- ably) “ baptism should be the outward and visible “ sign.”—Surely such passages of scripture as these ought at least to rescue sprinkling and pouring from the misplaced and pitiful ridicule, which has so often been directed against them by the abettors of immer- sion. It is, I repeat, in *the application of water as a cleansing element*, that the appropriateness of the rite consists. Were *this* admitted, I should not be disposed, as I have before hinted, to consider the *mode of its ap- plication* as essential. I must, however, declare my conviction, that, whilst I have produced decisive in- stances of baptism, in the phraseology of the New Tes- tament, being equivalent to *effusion*, I have never yet seen an instance established, of its necessarily or cer- tainly signifying *immersion*. I have already said, that it is not by *etymology*, but by *usage*, that this point can be fairly determined ; and the attempts made to deter- mine it by usage, from the New Testament, in favour of immersion, have ever appeared to me entire failures. Two or three brief remarks shall suffice on some of the modes of reasoning.

The argument from etymology has been supported by the observation, that, in most of its occurrences,

the verb is connected with the preposition EN—ἐν ὕδατι, —ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ,—&c.—*in water,—in the Holy Spirit, &c.*—It is truly surprising, that so much stress should be laid on the frequently vague import of a Greek preposition. This preposition (ἐν) is necessarily rendered *with* in many of its occurrences. Our baptist friends are sufficiently aware of this. And yet, this being the case, the use of it in the present instance *determines nothing*; because, before it can be made out that the preposition should be rendered *in*, it must be previously proved that the verb signifies exclusively *to immerse*—the propriety of the one translation obviously depending upon the establishment of the other.—Nor is this all. We have, in the very case before us, the clearest evidence of the fallacy of the criticism: for, as we have seen a little ago, the promise “Ye shall be “baptized EN πνεύματι ἁγίῳ,” was verified by the *pouring out* of this Spirit *upon the disciples*.—To be immersed, or plunged, *in the Holy Ghost and in fire*, are expressions not merely harsh and grating to the ear,—I should not rest much upon that, because there are few or no modes of speech, to which both the ear and the mind may not, by custom, become habituated and reconciled;—but they are expressions in direct opposition to the invariable representations of scripture respecting the gift of the Spirit.—Mr. Cox asks, “What reason can be assigned, if pouring be the proper method of administering baptism, for the constant use of a term in the New Testament, which, “every critic admits, signifies immersion, and which “even Mr. Ewing allows to mean immersion *as much* “as pouring; and the entire omission of all those “Greek words which contain, in their primary, or

“general application, the sense of *effusion* or *pouring*?” “Either of the following verbs,” says he, “might have answered the purpose; βαλλω, *jacio*, ἐκχέω *effundo*, ἐπιχέω *infundo*, ἐκχύνω *effundo*, καταχέω *effundo*, προσ-
 “χέω *adfundo*: they are moreover all made use of in
 “the writings of the apostles, and yet they are never
 “applied to the ordinance of baptism. The same
 “may be affirmed of ἐαντίζω, *I sprinkle*.”* But this is
 either inconsiderate, or uncandid. It is true, that
 such terms do not happen to be used with immediate
 application to the *ordinance* of baptism, because βαπτίζω
 is the appropriate term, the *vox signata*, for that *ordi-*
nance. But to insinuate that they are never used as
equivalent to baptism, is to insinuate what is most un-
 true. Either ἐκχέω or ἐκχύνω (to *pour out*) is uniformly
 employed, as has been already noticed, to express the
 baptism of the Spirit. They on whom the *Spirit was*
poured out are most explicitly affirmed to have been
baptized with the Spirit. There is no getting over this.
 The βαπτισμα is effected by the ἐκχύσις. It will never be
 alleged that ἐκχύνω signifies to *immerse*, yet the apostle
 Peter declares the ἐκχύσις to have been the accomplish-
 ment of the promise, βαπτισθήσεσθε.—As to the verb ἐαν-
 τίζω, I shall only observe, that amongst the “*divers*
 “*washings*” (βαπτισματα, baptisms) of the old dispensa-
 tion, referred to Heb. ix. 10. must surely be included
 all the various modes of Jewish purification, and con-
 sequently the ἐαντισματα, or *sprinklings*, which were the
 most numerous. The passages, moreover, formerly
 cited, show, that, in scripture phraseology, sprinkling is
 equivalent to washing or cleansing.

* Cox on Baptism, p. 47.

Equally uncertain, as to the conclusion deducible from them, are the expressions, that John baptized “*in* “Jordan,” “*in* the river of Jordan”—ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ—ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ: Matth. iii. 6. Mark i. 5. Such expressions are inconclusive, for this obvious reason, that they are equally suitable, on the supposition of *pouring* having been the mode of baptism, as on that of *immersion*. Had John stood in the water, however shallow, or had he stood in the bed of the river at the water’s edge, and poured the water on those who came to him for baptism,—the historian not only might have used the same expression with propriety, but could hardly have used another.—An argument, then, is brought from the use of a particular preposition, to fix the verb to one of two alleged meanings:—but if the preposition may be used with equal propriety, whichever of the meanings be affixed to the verb, it is needless to say that the use of it *determines neither*.—The truth is, that our baptist friends have their own sense of the verb previously fixed in their minds; and, instead of ascertaining the sense of the verb by the use of the preposition, they determine the sense of the preposition from its connection with the verb.

This will be further evident, from the sense affixed by some of them to another preposition, on one occasion at least used in connection with βαπτίζω,—the preposition ΕΙΣ. It is said, Mark i. 9. “Jesus came from “Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John,” ΕΙΣ τον Ἰορδάνην. This is, by some antipædobaptists, translated *into Jordan*; and is considered as settling the point, because being “baptized *to* or *towards* Jordan” is nonsense. And nonsense no doubt it is. But the remark—settles no point whatever, unless it be the in-

consideration or prejudice of such critics. They surely know, that, in such connections, *εις* not unusually has the signification of *at*. So it is correctly rendered in Acts viii. 40. "Philip was found *at* Azotus." Acts xxv. 15. "About whom, when I was *at* Jerusalem," &c.; and in other places. And this very occurrence of it, in Mark i. 9. is adduced, in dictionaries, as one of the instances in which it has this signification. Mr. Cox is very confident, that because the phrase *ἐν τῷ Ἰερουσαλὴμ* is used in one place, the phrase *εἰς τὸν Ἰερουσαλὴμ* must necessarily have the same signification. If the observations in the preceding paragraph be just, nothing decisive would follow, even were this admitted. It is hardly worth while, therefore, to deny it. But it requires no great sagacity to perceive, that as *εἰς* unquestionably signifies *at* in many of its occurrences, we are as much entitled to assume this to be its meaning here, and to confirm from it our interpretation of *ἐν*, as our good brother is to assume his sense of *ἐν*, and to infer from it his interpretation of *εἰς*.

"In remarking upon Matth. iii. 16." says Mr. Cox, "Mr. Ewing expresses himself thus:—'I suppose *no man upon earth* who can read *ἀνέβη εὐθύς ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος*, 'imagines it to be any thing else than 'he went up straightway *from* the water.' It is presumable, notwithstanding the hostility against Dr. Campbell, that 'he was at least *able to read* the words recited; and 'yet he *imagined* them to mean 'he no sooner *arose out of* the water.' *Vossius, Venema, Doddridge*, and 'a thousand others, were certainly *able to read* these words, and yet they imagined them to have a meaning different from the interpretation of our Glasgow friend, and conformable to that of the Principal of

“ Marischall College, and of almost all the critics, “ both baptist and pædobaptist.”*

Now the man who names *three* critics, and refers to the rest by *thousands*, should be sure of his correctness at least in his small sample. I happen not to have Vossius and Venema by me; but I have just looked into Doddridge, and find his translation in harmony, not with Dr. Campbell’s, but with Mr. Ewing’s! It is—“ *And after Jesus was baptized, as soon as he ascended out of the water to the bank of Jordan.*” This needs no comment. Are we to consider this as a specimen of the care of Mr. Cox in consulting his authorities, or of his candour and correctness in referring to them?—It is indeed quite unnecessary to go through a thousand critics, to ascertain the meaning of the phrases καταβαίνειν εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ, and ἀναβαίνειν ἀπὸ (or ἐκ) τοῦ ὕδατος. We need not go beyond the New Testament; for in it we have the clearest and most explicit proof, that they are phrases totally unconnected with the *act of baptizing*. In Acts viii. 38, 39. it is said, “ They “ went down both into the water, both Philip and the “ Eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they “ were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the “ Lord caught away Philip, that the Eunuch saw him “ no more.”—Nothing can be clearer than this. The *act of baptizing* is something quite distinct from either the *going down into the water*, or the *coming up out of it*. If these two phrases had any reference at all to the mode of baptism, it would follow, that Philip was immersed under the water, and emerged out of it, as well as the Eunuch; which no one supposes. The plain

* Page 87.

meaning is, that Philip and the Eunuch descended together from the chariot *to*, or, if you will, *into* the water; that, when they had so descended, Philip baptized the Eunuch, but *in what way*, not a hint is given; and that, this being done, they ascended together again *out of*, or *from*, the water. *Both* went down, and *both* came up, but *one only* was *baptized*. I cannot imagine that our baptist friends should not perceive, how entirely the plain statement of the historian, in this passage, sets aside the whole of their argument derived from the modes of expression employed—*going down into*, and *coming up out of*, the water; the one being so clearly previous, and the other subsequent, to the act of baptizing.—I partake with Mr. Ewing in his astonishment that any man should ever have thought otherwise:—and I think I may add, that a *baptist* should ever have thought otherwise, is “passing strange.” I have been accustomed to understand, that our friends consider the *subject* or *recipient* of the ordinance as *passive*,—not going down under the water, and coming up out of it, himself, but being laid under it, and raised out of it, by another. But the *κατεβη* and the *ανεβη* express actions of the baptized person himself, and are quite distinct from his *being baptized*.

I have dwelt a great deal longer on the subject of the *mode* of baptism than was my original intention. The remarks made are intended to show, from the plain statements of the New Testament itself, that baptism was performed by sprinkling or pouring, and that there is no necessity for any learned appeal to other authorities. This appeal has been made by pædobaptists, and made, in my judgment, with success. They do not deny that the verbs *βαπτω* and *βαπτίζω* signify to *dip*

or immerse; but they do deny, that this is their only signification, and that it is their signification when they are used by the sacred writers. In insisting that immersion is the sole signification of the verbs, baptists appear to me to discover a lamentable deficiency of critical candour; to be much more *ingenious* than *ingenuous*; and sometimes, without perceiving it, to employ a sophistry, of which the conclusions, even if they were sound, are nothing to their purpose.—For example: Mr. Cox is somewhat testy with Mr. Ewing for referring to the use of βαπτω with reference to Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iv. 33. “His body was wet (or wetted) “with the dew of heaven.” This is at least the twentieth time, Mr. Cox alleges, that this instance has been produced in the controversy. But the question is, not how often it has been *produced*, but how often it has been *refuted*. If it has not been fairly met and set aside, it is not frequency of repetition that will deprive it of its force. There is no term of prescription that changes truth into falsehood; or in the course of which an argument becomes weak, that once had strength. It is not repetition for twenty times, nor for twenty times twenty, that can ever impair it. On the contrary, the longer it stands unrepelled, it gets stronger and stronger.—Let us see, then, what Mr. Cox makes of this case. He thinks the ordinary reply satisfactory, “That a body exposed to eastern dews would be as “wet as if plunged in water:” but considering the passage as “meriting a little more detailed explanation,” he goes on to observe:—“The verb here is used in “the passive voice, in the second aorist, and the indicative mood, implying consequently that the action “was past and indefinite as to time. It does not imply

“ the *manner* in which the effect was produced, but the “ *effect itself*; not the mode by which the body of the “ king was wetted, but its *condition*, as resulting from “ exposure to the dews of heaven. Suppose, by way “ of illustration, we select another word, and put it into “ the same voice and tense; as, ἐβλάβη ὑπο σοῦ; ‘ he was “ hurt by you.’ It is obvious, that this representation “ might refer to an injury done long ago, and would “ predicate nothing of the *manner* in which it was in- “ flicted: it simply expresses the *fact* and the *condi- “ tion* of injury which resulted.”*—Now what is the amount of all this? Twenty times twenty have we poor pædobaptists been told, that there is no room for reasoning; that the idea of *immersion* is in the very words βαπτω and βαπτίζω; that *immersion baptism* is consequently a *tautology*, and *baptism by pouring* a *contradiction*. And yet here, on Mr. Cox’s own showing, is an instance, in which βαπτω “ *predicates nothing of the “ manner.*” It does not denote *immersion*; it does not denote being wet as the *effect of immersion*!—Suppose we admit that it signifies the *state of being wet*: still it cannot be denied that it signifies this state, as the result, not of plunging, but of the very gentlest of possible affusions: βαπτω is used, and expresses nothing of *immersion*! I have only to ask Mr. Cox, whether he would consider a person *duly baptized*, if water were *poured upon him till he were thoroughly wetted*. If he would, then what would become of the favourite idea of the emblematic representation, in baptism, of a burial and resurrection?

. Considering, then, as I have repeatedly mentioned,

the emblematic import of baptism, to be derived from the cleansing or purifying nature of the element employed, not from the mode of its application, although *affusion* appears to have the decided countenance of the New Testament scriptures; I proceed to illustrate my first position,—that baptism, and that baptism administered to infants, is a STANDING VISIBLE MEMORIAL, IN THE CHURCH, OF IMPORTANT TRUTHS.

Baptism itself, whether administered to infants or to adults, is a permanent remembrancer of guilt and pollution,—of the consequent necessity of cleansing from both,—and of the means provided for such cleansing, the blood and Spirit of Christ. But, on these general views of the import of the ordinance, it is not needful for me to dwell. There are additional truths brought to mind, by the *administration of the ordinance to children*, which it is more to my present purpose to notice.

1. Infant baptism contains a constant memorial of *original sin*,—of the *corruption of our nature* being not merely contracted but *inherent*. Every time it is administered to an infant, it emblematically reminds all who witness it, of the truth expressed by the Psalmist, “Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” And this doctrine of original corruption, of which infant baptism is a standing practical recognition, is one of fundamental importance; one, I am satisfied, to inadequate conceptions and impressions of which may be traced all the principal perversions of the gospel. In proportion to its relative importance in the system of Divine truth, is it of consequence that it should not be allowed to slip out of mind. The baptism of every child brings it to view, and impresses it.

If in any case it should be otherwise, the fault is not in the ordinance, but in the power of custom, and in the stupidity and carelessness of spectators, of parents, of ministers. It teaches, very simply, but very significantly, that, even from the womb, children are the subjects of pollution; that they stand in need of a participation in the pardon of the original apostasy, and of purification from the inherent depravity of their nature, in order to their entering heaven, and seeing God.—The impression of such truths is of the very highest importance, especially to parents, in fixing the principles on which their children are to be trained and instructed, and in directing their practical application. Let not an institution, then, which serves to sustain the remembrance and impression of such truths, be represented as destitute of use.

That infant baptism contains a practical testimony, from the Divine author of the institution, to the necessity of regeneration, is a very different thing from its being regeneration itself, or invariably accompanied by it in its infant subject. To represent “the majority of “pædobaptists in general as believing in baptismal regeneration”* is a rash and unfounded slander. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration is, in many respects, as pernicious in its tendencies, as it is absurd on principles of reason, and destitute of foundation in scripture. It is an abuse, for which, as for many others, the ordinance itself is not responsible. The only wonder is, that any man of common sense should ever have maintained it.

* Birt's *Strictures on Mr. Burder's Sermon on the Right of Infants to Baptism.*

2. Whilst infant baptism reminds us of the humbling doctrine of original depravity, it brings before our minds a truth of a different kind,—eminently cheering and encouraging,—namely, that little children are not incapable of being subjects of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ and participating in its blessings.—I need not set about proving this; because their capability is granted by baptists themselves:—they are admitted to have been pronounced by Christ visible subjects of his kingdom. On that beautiful passage, Mark x. 13—16. Mr. Maclean says, “Here are children brought to Christ, *declared of his kingdom*, and blessed, and thus becoming *visible subjects*; yet we read nothing of their baptism.” With the latter clause we have at present no concern. Far be it from us to deny that infants may be acknowledged to be of the kingdom of God, without baptizing them.” Far be it from us to pass any such sentence of exclusion against the children of our baptist brethren, however much we may think them mistaken. We do not consider the outward rite as thus essential to salvation. But this we say, that if infants are capable subjects of the kingdom, and are pronounced such by the Lord himself, there is surely no contradiction or incongruity in infant baptism; that is, in the application of the *sign* to those who are admitted to be capable of the *thing signified*. There is certainly nothing in this that can warrant the scorn and ridicule with which it has been assailed. To admit an infant to be a “visible subject” of the spiritual kingdom, and to laugh at the application to such an infant of the rite which signifies the peculiar blessings of that kingdom, does not seem to indicate great consistency of thought or feeling.

Let it not be said, the ground of ridicule is, that infants are incapable of that faith, which the New Testament affirms to be necessary to baptism, and of which baptism is the profession. It has often been remarked, and it has never been satisfactorily answered, that this mode of reasoning, if valid for the exclusion of infants from baptism, must be equally valid for their exclusion from salvation. If it be a correct syllogism—Believing is necessary to baptism: infants are incapable of believing: therefore, no infants ought to be baptized;—then the following must be correct too—Believing is necessary to salvation: infants are incapable of believing: therefore infants cannot be saved.—Mr. Cox and our baptist friends may be angry at the twentieth repetition of this too. But it is simply impossible to get rid of the second conclusion, if the first be sound. When it is said, “He that *believeth* and is *baptized* shall be saved: he that *believeth* not shall be condemned;” it is very manifest, from the nature of the thing, and from the charge in the preceding verse, “Go, preach the gospel to every creature,”—that the language refers to mankind in general to whom the gospel *could* be preached; that is, to adults, who were capable of hearing and understanding what was said.—It is one of those cases, in which baptists themselves are constrained to have recourse to the ground of *general language*. They apply this principle to that part of the verse that connects *salvation* with faith, because, if they took this strictly and universally, it would inevitably exclude infants from being saved. Have we not reason, then, to complain of want of candour, when they will not allow the application of the same principle of interpretation to that clause which connects *bap-*

tism with faith? The connection of both with faith is stated in the same sentence, in the same unqualified terms; and the same principle of explanation which warrants or condemns the one inference, must equally warrant or condemn the other.

I am strongly inclined to agree with those, who regard the children of believers in the light of *disciples*. If their parents do their duty, they surely are such. It is quite impossible for us to say, how soon the Holy Spirit may begin his secret operations in the soul of a child, under spiritual training, and the subject of believing prayer. And until the principles which are instilled into the child's mind by early tuition, recommended by a godly example, and impressed by affectionate and faithful admonition, are either avowedly rejected, or are shown to be professed without influence on the heart and life,—how can we be entitled to say, that they are *not* disciples? They are *learners*; and, as far as we can judge, lambs of the flock of the “*good shepherd*.” Indications of the contrary may present themselves, sometimes earlier, and sometimes later: but in forming our estimate, we must make allowances for the peculiarities of childhood; and not foolishly look for the same manifestation of the power of the truth, in a babe, which we expect in a full-grown man.

On the question, Are the baptized children of believers *church members*?—various opinions have been entertained. I shall state, with diffidence, my own.

In the first place:—Baptism, it seems evident from the New Testament, is not to be regarded as a *social* or *church ordinance*. It did not, when administered to adults, introduce the persons baptized to connection with any particular church, or society of christians.

They were simply baptized into the faith of Christ, and the general fellowship of the gospel. We have one clear and decisive exemplification of this, in the case of the eunuch of Ethiopia. He was baptized by Philip in the desert, when on a journey, where there was, of course, no church; nor was there any, where the eunuch was going. His baptism, therefore, merely recognized him as a professed disciple of Jesus, without constituting him a member of any particular christian church. And so it was with others. The converts, when baptized, "joined themselves," wherever they had opportunity, to the disciples; but their baptism was administered to them, simply on a profession of their faith; it was previous to such union, and formed no part of the services of the church, with which they might subsequently unite.

Secondly: This being the case, I am disposed to regard the children of believers as disciples, in a situation somewhat analogous to the one described. They have been baptized; they have become the subjects of spiritual instruction,—of "the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and they are in training for the full fellowship of the people of God, in all the ordinances of his house.—If, on growing up, they do not hold the truth, in the knowledge of which they have been instructed, and on the principles of which they have been "nurtured and admonished;"—they must be treated accordingly;—they cannot be admitted to the communion of the church. If, on the contrary, they "abide in the truth," "holding fast the faithful word as they have been taught," then they are at liberty to unite in fellowship, wherever their judgment and conscience, on examination of the word of God, may direct them.—

I do not go so far as to speak of their being *separated from the church* at any particular age, by a formal *sentence of exclusion*, when they do not give evidence of the reception and influence of the gospel; for the reason just assigned, that their baptism has not constituted them properly members of a particular society, but only disciples of Christ, under training for the duties and enjoyments of his kingdom.—I feel confirmed in this view of the case, by the consideration, that, when the apostle Paul, in any of his epistles, addresses himself to the *children* of the believers,—whilst by so doing he recognizes them as sustaining a relation to the christian community, he yet does not commit the instruction and training of them to the church, or to the pastors of the church, but enjoins it upon *the parents*, as a matter as yet of private and domestic concern.* Ephes. vi. 1—4.

3. Before proceeding to the *duties* which this ordinance brings to mind, and enforces, there is one other highly important doctrine,—which it is beautifully calculated to impress.—When our blessed Redeemer took the little children in his arms and said, “Of such is the kingdom of heaven,”—he added solemnly to his disciples, “Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not “receive the kingdom of God *as a little child*, he shall “not enter therein.”—When an infant receives the blessings of the kingdom, it is *gratuitously*; not as the reward of works of righteousness; not in the exercise

* I was not aware, when I was led, by my own reflection, to adopt the view which I have given in the text of the church-membership of the children of believers, that it was in perfect coincidence with that given by the late Dr. Dwight, in the 157th Sermon of his THEOLOGY. I leave the reader to consult it for himself. I had not looked into the work, on this subject, till after my own manuscript was ready for the press.

of high-minded self-confidence. So must it be with *you*, says the Saviour, the Lord of the kingdom. You must be “justified freely by the grace of God;” you must own yourselves undeserving, and receive all as a gift; whatever you have done, you must come for the blessings of my kingdom as if you had done nothing, and receive them as little children. This was levelled at the spiritual pride and self-righteousness of the Pharisees, against which he, on other occasions also, warns his disciples.—The *man* who receives the kingdom, must receive it on the same terms as the *child*;—not for a life of virtue,—not for his faith, his repentance, his obedience, as if these could merit any thing from God. He must, as to his *title* to its blessings, be divested of every thing.—Now this is one of the essential articles of gospel truth; one of the immutable laws of the kingdom; one of the indispensable characters of its genuine subjects. And this truth is constantly exhibited, and affectingly impressed, in infant baptism. Every time the ordinance is administered to a child, all who witness it may be considered as having the words of Christ symbolically repeated in their hearing—“Verily I say “unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of “heaven as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” It is not the fault of the ordinance, but of its administrator and witnesses, if such impressions are not made.

These are lessons for all,—lessons of essential consequence; and the wisdom of God has not only revealed and oft repeated them in his word, but has also embodied them in emblematic institutions, which serve as visible memorials of them in his church, to all generations. Such are both baptism and the Lord’s supper. And the former, when, according to God’s appointment,

administered to infants, contains a constantly renewed intimation of the delightful truth, that whilst they are the subjects of guilt, and pollution, and curse, in consequence of the original apostasy, they are, at the same time, through Jesus Christ, partakers of the blessings of the kingdom of mercy.

II. Having considered infant baptism as a memorial of fundamental truths, let me now proceed to view it as *a remembrancer of important duties, and an encouragement to their performance.*

I shall, on this part of my subject, offer a few brief remarks on the duties of *parents*, of *children*, and of *churches*.

1. The ordinance is inseparably connected, and all christian parents ought so to regard it, with the incumbent duty of “bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” If this connection is lost sight of,—if it is not contemplated at the time, and is practically disregarded afterwards, the ordinance becomes nothing better than a useless ceremony, and an idle and profane mockery of its Divine author.—Much has been said, by pædobaptists, of the rights and privileges of infants, and of the impropriety of abridging their privileges, and abstracting their rights, in refusing them baptism. But the right and the privilege are not worth the contending for, unless the ordinance be connected with parental instruction, discipline, and prayer. It is evident, that the pouring of a little water on an infant’s face, can, in itself, do it no good; and as little would the immersion of its whole body. The mere external recognition of its connection with the christian community, can be of no benefit, except as associated with subsequent training, for the performance of the

duties, and the enjoyment of the blessings, of that community. The profit to the child must be through the medium of the parent: and it has long appeared to me, that it is to the parent, rather than to the child, that infant baptism is, in the first instance, to be reckoned a privilege. It is an ordinance, in which there is brought before the minds of pious parents, a pleasing and animating recognition of the covenant promises of God to them and to their offspring, which form so great an encouragement to them in the discharge of duty, and in looking, by prayer, for the divine blessing upon the objects of their tender love. That multitudes who have their children baptized never think of the ordinance in any such light, and are quite regardless of the obligations which, I will not say it imposes, but which it implies, and brings to mind,—is a melancholy truth. And I would earnestly admonish those parents, of the guilt they are contracting, by their solemn mockery of heaven, in the careless profanation of a Divine institution. The abuse is awfully extensive; and it is one of the evils which we owe, not entirely indeed, but in a very great degree, to the nationalizing of christianity by its incorporation with our civil polity, and the consequent universality of its profession. This abuse has afforded a great advantage to the adversaries of infant baptism; but there is both weakness and unfairness in having recourse to it. It shows a mind incapable of distinguishing between the precepts of God and the perversions of them by men. The Lord's supper, from the same cause, has been as extensively perverted and abused as infant baptism. But, while we regret and mourn the prostitution of any ordinance of God, this can never be a valid reason for our neglecting its legitimate and scriptural use.

I am fully persuaded of the truth of the remark, that if infant baptism had not been so much abused, it would not have been so much opposed.

Let it not be said, that parents may have a sufficiently strong feeling of their duty to their children, and may fulfil that duty equally well with others, although they do not see the scripture authority for their baptism. I do not deny, that a baptist may be exemplary in the christian tuition of his family, and that many a pædobaptist may be very much the contrary. But this is not the question. I can conceive of a christian, from certain conscientious but unscriptural and groundless scruples, living for successive years in the neglect of the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and yet, to all appearance, influenced as much as others, in his general character, by the habitual remembrance of his Redeemer. We should never infer from such a case, that the ordinance was useless. Neither ought we in the other. If God has given promises to his people and their seed, promises fitted to stimulate believing parents to the fulfilment of their sacred trust, and has instituted an ordinance in which these promises are recognized and pledged to them, it does not become us to neglect the gracious and pleasing rite, on the ground that we can keep the promises sufficiently well in mind without it. It is kind in that God who "knoweth our frame," not only to give us his word, but to embody, as it were, that word to our senses, to confirm it to our faith, and to impress it upon our memories and hearts, by significant outward institutions. "*Quam enim suave piis animis,*" says Calvin very beautifully, "*non verbo tantum, sed oculi etiam spectaculo, certiores fieri, tantum se gratiæ apud patrem cœlestem obtinere, ut posteritas sua illi*

“ curæ sit.” “ How pleasing to the minds of the godly, “ not only to have a verbal assurance, but to have it certified to them by visible signs, that the grace of their “ heavenly Father is so great, as to extend, not to themselves only, but to their offspring !”—If christian parents do not feel, as they ought, the practical encouragement to duty which the ordinance, as a recognition of Divine promise, presents, and do not act accordingly, (and all of us must be sensible of criminal deficiency)—the fault lies, not with the institution, or with its author, but with their want of faith, and of right disposition.

We consider baptism, as an ordinance for *believers and their children*. I am aware, indeed, that I do not express the sentiment of *all* pædobaptists, when I say, that the administration of it to children ought to be confined to those of *believers only* ; meaning, of course, by the designation, such as we have reason, at the time, to acknowledge as believers. In regard to adults, there is an obvious difference between the *ground of title* to the *reception* of baptism, and the *ground of warrant* for its *administration*. The former is *sincere and genuine faith* : the latter is the *profession of faith*, uncontradicted by any circumstance which deprives it of credibility. When Philip had “ preached Jesus ” to the eunuch of Ethiopia, and the latter said, “ What doth hinder me to be baptized ? ” the reply expressed, in very simple and explicit terms, the ground of right to the ordinance —“ If thou believest with all thy heart ” (that is, if thou really and in earnest believest) “ thou mayest.”—But it was not according to any secret “ discernment “ of spirits,” that baptism was administered ; and mistakes might be made, respecting the genuineness of profession. When the same Philip, in the city of Samaria,

“preached the things concerning the kingdom of God, “and the name of Jesus Christ,” Simon Magus was amongst those who professed to receive his testimony; and on this profession he was baptized.—Here, then, appears the distinction, between the right to baptism, and the warrant for its administration. Simon Magus had not the same right to baptism as the Ethiopian eunuch; for, instead of “believing with all his heart,” it appeared afterwards that he was still “in the gall of “bitterness and the bond of iniquity:” but, in both cases, Philip was equally warranted in administering the ordinance; at least, we have no ground to presume, that there were any circumstances in Simon’s profession, which ought to have destroyed its credit, and which would have justified Philip in refusing to baptize him.

I am not aware, from any facts or principles in the New Testament, of any profession of faith being sufficient for admission to baptism, that is not sufficient for admission to the Lord’s supper, and the full fellowship of the church of Christ. Baptism was not administered to adults on a mere declaration of willingness to be instructed, but on a profession of faith in the testimony delivered. Although the statements of the history are very brief,—so brief as occasionally to produce oversights and hasty conclusions,—I do not recollect any exception to this representation. When the profession of faith was made, upon hearing the gospel and witnessing its accompanying evidence, it was, in the judgment of charity, supposed to be sincere,—to be “with all “the heart:” nor am I aware of the existence, in apostolic times, of any such anomalous description of persons, as those who were baptized but were not admitted

to church-fellowship. The three thousand who, on the day of Pentecost, “gladly received Peter’s word, “were baptized;” and “the same day” they were “added to the church.”—“John’s baptism” may be considered as debatable ground, and, therefore, I shall not enter upon it; but I ask for an instance, subsequently to the commencement of apostolic preaching, and the first formation of a church, of a person making a profession of faith which was sufficient for his admission to baptism, and yet not sufficient for his reception to other christian ordinances. I know of none. The genuineness of the profession, made at baptism, was tried *in the church*, not in an intervening period between baptism and admission to the church.—Now the same principles which the New Testament teaches me to apply to the baptism of adults, it of course prescribes for the baptism of their children. As I should not conceive myself warranted to baptize an adult, on any profession of faith which would not warrant my receiving him to the table of the Lord;—neither do I consider it right and scriptural, to baptize the child of any man, on a profession which would not justify his admission into the church. I can think of no principle, which, as a rule of practice, is definite and intelligible, but this. I am well aware of the different sentiments entertained, and the different course pursued, by many (I might, I fear, say, by *most*) of my pædobaptist brethren in the south. I cannot but think them very far in the wrong:—and I have never been able to find any thing like fixed and precise ground amongst them, on this subject. Some place the warrant for baptizing, in a willingness to be instructed; some, in a general profession of christianity, and of faith in the Bible; others, in the

attendance of the party applying for it at church, and bringing his family with him, so as to put them in the way of good ; while others still, I believe, go so far as to concur with the established church of England, and administer it to all who apply, considering it as the privilege of the child, without regard to the profession and character of the parent at all. Now, in all this, there is an undefined and unsettled laxity, which appears to me highly pernicious in its practical consequences ; and which, moreover, tends to weaken, and even, if followed fairly out, to overthrow, the whole of the argument for infant baptism that is founded on the covenant relation, so distinctly recognized in scripture, between parent and child.—Let me not be misunderstood. I do not say, that I would not baptize the child of any man, who *is not a member of a church*, or who *does not immediately join one*. What I say is, that I would not baptize, where I could not conscientiously receive to communion on the same profession of faith.—I have before noticed the extent to which the lax administration and abuse of the ordinance prevails :—and I should rejoice to see my independent brethren setting their countenance and their practice decidedly against it.

One evil resulting from the prevailing abuse, is, its promoting the thoughtlessness of parents, as to the connection between the ordinance and their duty.—“ I know him,” said the God of Abraham, “ that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment : that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”—Gen. xviii. 19.—I do not enter here into the illustration of

parental duties, and of the manner in which they ought to be fulfilled. But I press upon christian parents the example of the father of the faithful, as an instance in which the discharge of duty is connected with the fulfilment of promise. All the promises of God, indeed, are intended to operate, not as inducements to indolence but as stimulants to activity. The assurance, that "it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure," is not to encourage us to expect spiritual progress without the use of means; but to excite us to "work out our own salvation," in the diligent employment of these means, "with fear and trembling."—Abraham's bringing up his family in the fear of the Lord is connected, in the above quoted passage, with the Lord's "bringing upon him that which he had spoken of him." But how could it contribute to this? On the promise of a fleshly seed, I have before said, it could have no conceivable influence. But on that of a spiritual seed, "a seed to serve the Lord," its influence is immediate, and apparent. The means are suited to the end,—the cause to the effect. Jehovah begins the fulfilment of his promise, to make him the spiritual "father of many nations," and "to be a God to him and his seed after him," by Abraham's own instrumentality, in the religious training of his family; and in this way "race unto race" was made to "praise him," and "one generation to tell of his wonderful works to another."—for "he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known unto their children, that the generation to come might know them, and the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them

“unto their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of the Lord, but keep his commandments.”—It is still by the agency of parents, that God fulfils his word. It is while they bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” that he “pours out his Spirit upon their seed and his blessing upon their offspring,” so that they “grow up as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses:” and if we are looking for the blessing apart from the discharge of the duty, we are not exercising commanded confidence, but guilty of unwarranted and irrational presumption.

Christian parents,—the charge intrusted to you is one, the most momentous and interesting that can be imagined by the human mind. It is the charge of immortal souls. Every child, when born into the world, enters upon an existence that is never to terminate,—upon a short and precarious life on earth, which must be succeeded by eternal blessedness, or eternal woe. How solemn the consideration!—And with regard to your own children, to you is committed the sacred trust, of imparting to them that knowledge, which, through the blessing of God, shall make them “wise unto salvation.” These lights, lighted for eternity, it is yours to feed with holy oil from the sanctuary of God, that they may burn, with pure and lovely radiance, before the throne above!—These never-dying plants, it is yours to rear and to cherish, bringing down upon them, by your prayers, the dews and rains of heaven, that so they may flourish and bear fruit for ever, in the paradise of God.—The language of the “Heavenly Father” to every christian parent, is that of Pharaoh’s daughter to the mother of Moses, “Take

“this child, and nurse it for me.” O forget not the sacred obligation. Let it be engraven on your hearts, “as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond.” You love your children. They are dear to you as the apple of your eye,—precious as your own souls. What is there that you would not part with, to secure their well-being? And are not their eternal interests first in your thoughts, and first in your desires for them? If you feel as christians, they are,—they must be. Let them, then, be first in your prayers, and first in your exertions. Seek to impress early on their hearts a sense of the unspeakable importance of eternal things. Teach them the knowledge and fear of the Lord, when you sit in the house, and when you walk by the way; never with the repulsive austerity of a master, but with all the engaging tenderness of parental love. Let no prospect of temporal advantage induce you, to expose their souls to unnecessary hazards, from the snares and temptations of a deceitful world. Let no corporeal attractions, and no mental accomplishments, however gratifying they may lawfully be, appropriate that peculiar joy, which, in the hearts of godly parents, must ever be reserved for “seeing their children walking in “truth.”—Set your hearts, with intense and unquenchable desire, on the salvation of your offspring. Ask it of God with the fervour and importunity of faith. Show the sincerity of your prayers, by unwearied attention to the use of necessary means:—and I doubt not, you will have the blessedness of seeing, amongst your offspring, a seed arise to serve the Lord.

If in any case there should be an apparent failure of the blessing, there is a call to much searching of heart, and close investigation of the whole process of training.

It is surely safer, to question our own fidelity to duty, than God's fidelity to promise.—Are you sure, that the salvation of your children has engaged your desires, with a fervour and a constancy proportioned to its infinite importance?—Have you pursued this object with sufficient seriousness, as “the one thing needful” to your parental happiness?—While you have been teaching the truths of God, have you been careful to “walk before your house in a perfect way,” exemplifying, in your whole deportment, their holy, heavenly influence?—Have you, in no measure, been guilty of sacrificing the souls of your children to their temporal interests?—Have your efforts and your prayers been engaged about this object, with any thing like a proportion to its unutterable magnitude?—Have your exertions been believing exertions,—your prayers, the prayers of faith?—or has there not been, in both, a lamentable deficiency of firm, and simple-hearted, and practical confidence in God?

May the “God of the families of Israel” impress, more deeply than ever, upon your minds, the duty enjoined upon you! Let the baptism of your own children, and every baptism you are called to witness, remind you of your obligations, and bring you to your knees, with tears of conscious short-coming, and of earnest entreaty, for grace to fulfil them!

2. To the children of godly parents, I would briefly but affectionately say:—You enjoy, or you have enjoyed, a most precious privilege,—a blessing for which you cannot be sufficiently thankful. But the privilege may, like every other, be abused or neglected, and the blessing, by this means, converted to a curse. Every favour of heaven heightens the responsibility of those on whom

it is conferred, and, through the perversity of the human heart, exposes to the danger of augmented guilt; responsibility being according to privilege. If your parents considered aright what they were doing, when they presented you to the Lord in the ordinance of baptism, it was not, with them, a season of thoughtless merriment, on the giving of a name to their child; but a time of tender feeling, of serious reflection, of solicitous anticipation, of solemn prayer. They brought you in faith to Jesus. They implored his blessing upon you. They felt the weight of the sacred trust. They placed believing reliance on the divine promises. They resolved that you should be trained in the fear of the Lord,—in his “nurture and admonition;” and they looked, with earnest desire, for the grace of God, to enable them to fulfil their resolution. I speak not of vows made by them in your name; and far less, of god-fathers and god-mothers, stepping in between you and your parents, and taking upon themselves a gratuitous responsibility in your behalf; because I find none of these things in my Bible, and regard them, along with some other practices, as inventions of men,—human appendages to a simple institution. But at your baptism, your parents had before them an impressive remembrancer of the obligations, on their part, arising from the promises of God’s covenant; they avowed their sense of these obligations, and their determination, in the strength of grace, to fulfil them; and, if they have acted in consistency with the professions then made, and with the design of the ordinance, they have brought you up as young disciples of the Saviour, instructing you in his truth, and affectionately admonishing you in his name. They have sought, on your behalf, the guidance of the

“good shepherd,” who “gathers the lambs in his arms
“and carries them in his bosom,” that under his gracious eye you might be induced to “follow the footsteps
“of the flock.”

Have you, then, my young friends, improved and profited by your connection with your parents, and the privileges thence arising? Have you entered into their desires?—have you valued the promises and blessings of God’s covenant?—have you sought, that the emblematic import of your baptism may be realized in your experience?—and that your names may be found, with those of your parents, in the Lamb’s book of life?—O beware of “forsaking the guide of your youth, and
“forgetting the covenant of your God,” else, to use his own expression, “you shall know his breach of promise,” and “bring upon yourselves a curse, and not
“a blessing.” Remember the warnings, “To whom
“much is given, of them will much be required:”—
“The servant that knew his Lord’s will, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with
“many stripes:”—“Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell; for
“if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have continued
“unto this day. But I say unto you, it shall be more
“tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee!”

If you have received, in the love of it, the “instruction
“of wisdom,” the duty of walking in fellowship with the church of Christ in all his ordinances, ought to be seriously pondered by you. It is true, that “except a
“man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom
“of God:” he cannot be received into it above, and is

not a fit member of it below. But, in the case of children, brought up in “the nurture and admonition of the “Lord,” the change which is thus expressed may often be, nay, often is, imperceptible in its first commencements, and gradual in its subsequent progress,—so that time and circumstances cannot be specified. This is what, from the nature of the case, we might reasonably anticipate. I do not say, there is such a thing as hereditary grace: but, as the grace of God, in its various blessings, is conveyed to sinners *by means*, it quite accords with the natural order of things, that it should accompany those means, and flow, as it were, in the same channel with them. So that, if the knowledge of God, the great mean by which the blessings of salvation come to be enjoyed, was appointed to be conveyed from generation to generation, we must suppose the blessings to be conveyed along with it, and the conveyance of the blessings to be the grand design of the conveyance of the knowledge. There is no other design, which we can imagine God to have had, in such appointment. And, therefore, although his grace is not imparted by fleshly birth; yet that, when his people are attentive to the means appointed, this grace should appear descending through their generations, cannot at all be matter of wonder.—Not that, in religious education, there is freedom from danger. Beware, my young friends, of thinking so. The natural depravity of our hearts has infused danger into every thing. The danger here is imminent. It is that of growing up in the form of godliness, without its power; in profession, without real principle; in outward virtue, without inward piety. Beware of this danger. But let not the jealous dread of it carry you to the extreme, of keeping back from

those ordinances, which you know it to be the duty of all to observe who believe in Christ, and fear God. If you are conscious of this faith and fear, and of your need of all the instituted means of stability and growth, neglect not those institutions, which are designed for the spiritual improvement of the disciples. Nothing ought to be more delightful to the churches of Christ and their pastors, than the admission amongst them of the children of the members,—the fruits of the Divine blessing on parental duty.

Some may belong to parents, who had them baptized in their infancy as a mere matter of form, in compliance with national custom, making them like others, giving them their name, and fancying that their being *christened* made them *christians* of course. But, if the profession of christianity made by your parents has been careless and worldly, destitute of spirituality and of scriptural evidence,—I have only to say, beware of following it.—Some have perplexed themselves with the question, whether, in such circumstances, they ought not to be re-baptized; and antipædobaptists are apt to feel a kind of triumphant self-complacency in such difficulties, and to urge them on weak consciences in their most puzzling forms. But nothing can be more unfair. Even if the difficulty were ever so perplexing, it could not, in the least degree, affect the conclusiveness of our general argument. A difficulty, which has resulted from the abuse of an ordinance, can never be fairly urged against the proper and legitimate use of it.—Our baptist friends suppose, that adult baptism only was the original practice of the New Testament churches, and, consequently, that it early gave place to the practice of infant baptism in ninety-nine hundredths of the chris

tian community. It is allowable, for the sake of argument, to suppose the case reversed. Suppose, then, infant baptism to have been the original practice, and to have been early renounced by ninety-nine hundredths of professing christians, the remaining hundredth alone retaining the custom:—suppose, that, when christianity came to be incorporated with the kingdoms of this world, adult instead of infant baptism had been the prevailing usage; and that as free an admission of adults to baptism had taken place, as there is now of parents to the baptism of their children, whilst the small minority (the pædobaptists) were conscientiously scrupulous as to the profession and character of those whose children they baptized:—it is not difficult to conceive, how many perplexing cases, and puzzling questions, must have arisen from this state of things, to those antipædobaptist dissenters from the established church, who did not approve of its nationality and unavoidable corruption. And these cases and questions the pædobaptist minority would have had the same ground for pressing upon *them*, as *they* now have for pressing upon pædobaptists those which have resulted from the actually existing circumstances. But it would have been as unfair in the one case as it is in the other. The great matter is, to ascertain scriptural principles; and then, when any case of difficulty is suggested, to make it our simple inquiry, What line of practice will be most consistent with those principles? Even if, in some little points, we should continue at a loss, we are not to renounce a practice which we are satisfied rests on the broad basis of scriptural authority, merely because, in consequence of abuses, questions can be

framed by a subtle adversary, which may carry in them a practical difficulty.

Simon Magus was baptized on his professing the faith, although it afterward appeared he was still “in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity.” Suppose that the rebuke of Peter had taken hold of his conscience, that he had been brought to true repentance; that “the thought of his heart had been forgiven him,” and that he had renewed his profession, in sincerity and right understanding; would it have been necessary to baptize him again? or would not a believing recognition of his former baptism have been enough?—When our baptist brethren themselves are disappointed in the profession of any one whom they have admitted to the ordinance, and are constrained to disown him, and to separate him from their fellowship;—if their dealings with him, and the discipline of the house of God, should subsequently bring him to a right mind, and he should acknowledge his former profession to have been without a proper spiritual understanding and feeling of the truth;—would they reckon it their duty to baptize him anew?—Even if the fault had in part lain with the elder by whom the person had been baptized,—if *he* had been chargeable with lightness and haste,—would they reckon re-baptism necessary?—It is possible, that different individuals amongst them may be disposed to answer this question differently;—and, in like manner, it is possible, that some pædobaptists may hold one opinion, and some another, as to the propriety of re-baptizing those children, when they come to maturity and profess the faith, whose parents, at the time of their baptism, were living without God;—(a point, however, it may be observed, in all cases of delicate, in many of difficult, and in some

of impossible determination:)—but no ground of objection to the views either of baptists or of pædobaptists could be more futile.—For my own part, my young friends, I see little cause for your distressing yourselves upon the subject. When your parents had the ordinance administered to *you*, it ought to have been understood by *them*. If they understood it not, or did not properly consider its import, and its connection with their duty, and did not act according to the obligations and the encouragements recognized in it; *they* were to be blamed, and *you* were to be pitied. But the meaning of the ordinance was not thereby altered; and, *if you are now satisfied of the scriptural ground for infant baptism*, any suspicion or conviction of the want of faith in your parents can no more be a valid reason for your being re-baptized, than the suspicion, or conviction, of the inadequacy of a previous profession, would be a valid reason *to the believer in adult baptism only*, for re-baptizing an adult, who should come to make that profession in earnest, which he had before made with carelessness or insincerity. In either case, the recognition of the ordinance, with a right understanding and an honest heart, should be considered as sufficient. The baptism of children, on the professed faith of *their parents*, stands, in this respect, on precisely the same footing, as the baptism of an adult upon *his own* profession. An adult may himself be baptized on a profession that is hollow-hearted and thoughtless; and a parent may have his children baptized on such a profession:—both the baptized adult and the parent may afterwards be brought under the saving power of the truth:—and, in these circumstances, whatever it would be right to do in the one case, it would be right to do in

the other. If it would be right to re-baptize the adult, it would be right to re-baptize the children of the parent; if no necessity would be felt for this in the case of the adult, neither is there such necessity in the case of the children. The adult and the parent would both recognize what before they had overlooked or disregarded,—the spiritual import of the rite,—and show the sincerity of their new profession, by acting according to it in their respective circumstances. And the very same principle extends to the child of a careless parent, when that child is brought to know the Lord, and to possess the blessings which the ordinance represents.

3. With regard to the duty of *churches* in reference to the children of the members, there is little said in the scriptures, and I shall not therefore enlarge. That they ought to feel an interest in the rising generation, cannot be questioned. The interest ought to be lively and tender. But the different ways in which this interest should practically express itself, are not authoritatively prescribed, but, like some other matters, left to discretion.

When the apostle, in his epistles, addressing himself to the churches, introduces the subject of the instruction and spiritual care of children, it is evident, that he devolves the important charge, not upon the associated body of believers, but on the parents amongst them to whom the children belonged. The very address, it is true, *to children*, as connected with the community of God's people, testifies the interest felt in them by the apostle himself, and contains a virtual admonition to the churches, to take care that they were not neglected. By connecting this with the immedi-

ately subjoined charge to parents, we are naturally led to the conclusion, that the principal way in which the care of the churches for the spiritual interests of the children connected with them ought to show itself, is their seeing to it that the parents discharge their duty faithfully. The parents have, by apostolic authority, as well as by the dictate of nature, the immediate charge of the children; and the church, by the same Divine authority, has the immediate oversight of the parents. The discipline of the churches ought certainly to be considered as extending to every description of sin. The violation, or neglect, of the parental trust, is a sin, of which cognizance ought to be taken, as well as of others. If parents, who are members of a church, are allowed to go on in such violation and neglect, the church is chargeable with an omission of duty. "Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," is as plain and explicit a command, as "Thou shalt not steal," or "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The violation of the one may not be of so easy detection, as that of the others. There may even, in certain cases, be circumstances of delicacy and difficulty, that require any cognizance of parental conduct to be gone about with great prudence, and cautious discrimination. But the *principle* of discipline is, in both cases, the same. We must not allow sin to be committed, and persisted in, without endeavouring, by scriptural means, to bring the offender to repentance. And, surely, there is no sin which it is of more consequence to have corrected by repentance, than one which affects the best interests of the rising generation, and thus tends deeply to injure the prosperity of the church, and the cause and glory

of Christ. If undutifulness to parents, on the part of children, would be a proper subject of ecclesiastical reprehension, so surely should the neglect of children, on the part of parents. If the man who, in temporal things, "provides not for his own, and especially for those of his own house," is to be treated as one who "has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel;" can we hesitate, in so regarding the man, who leaves his children destitute, as far as his influence is concerned, of "the meat which endureth unto life eternal?" No parent can do this, that deserves the name of christian; and no such parent, therefore, should be a member of any christian church. There may be various degrees of the sin; and each case must be dealt with according to its own peculiar circumstances. But, I am verily persuaded, there is "utterly a fault amongst us," upon this subject. The pastors of the churches ought to feel it their duty, in public and in private, to press upon parents the fulfilment of their trust, and upon children the improvement of their privileges;—to ascertain, by domiciliary visits, the state of domestic instruction, and, with affectionate fidelity, to commend or admonish accordingly;—and, by occasional or stated meetings of a more public kind,—of the children, for example, in different districts of local residence, to stimulate both children and parents, and provoke the one and the other, respectively, to a holy emulation. And, in the use of all such means, the deacons and members of churches should show all possible countenance to the pastors, aid them to the full extent of their power, and "by love serve one another."

I conclude with one general caution.—Let all beware

of trusting, in any measure, for their salvation, to any outward observance. The Jews, who trusted and gloried in their circumcision, mistook and perverted its design, to the dishonour of Abraham, and of the God of Abraham, and to their own everlasting perdition. You have been baptized. As to the present view of the matter, it is of no consequence whether by sprinkling or immersion, whether in infancy or in adult years: if you fancy yourselves christians because you have been baptized, you are in the same fatal error in which the Jews were, who imagined themselves the children of Abraham and of God, because they were circumcised. Be not deceived. Those Jews perished without remedy, notwithstanding their circumcision, who refused to "submit themselves unto the righteousness of God," of which, when properly understood, it was the sign and the seal. So must all, without remedy, perish, notwithstanding their baptism and their other outward privileges, who are not "*born again*" by being made partakers of like precious faith with Abraham. Circumcision could not save the one; neither can baptism save the other. Mere natural descent from Abraham could not save the one; neither can mere natural relation to godly parents save the other. All the variety of external privilege and observance could not save the one;—outward connection with the purest church on earth, and the most punctilious attendance upon all its institutions, cannot save the other. "He was not a Jew who was one outwardly, neither was that circumcision which was outward in the flesh; but he was a Jew who was one inwardly, and circumcision was that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." He is

not a *christian*, who is one outwardly; neither is that *baptism* which is outward in the flesh; but he is a christian, who is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God. “In Christ Jesus “neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”*

* Rom. ii. 28, 29. Gal. vi. 15.

THE END.

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